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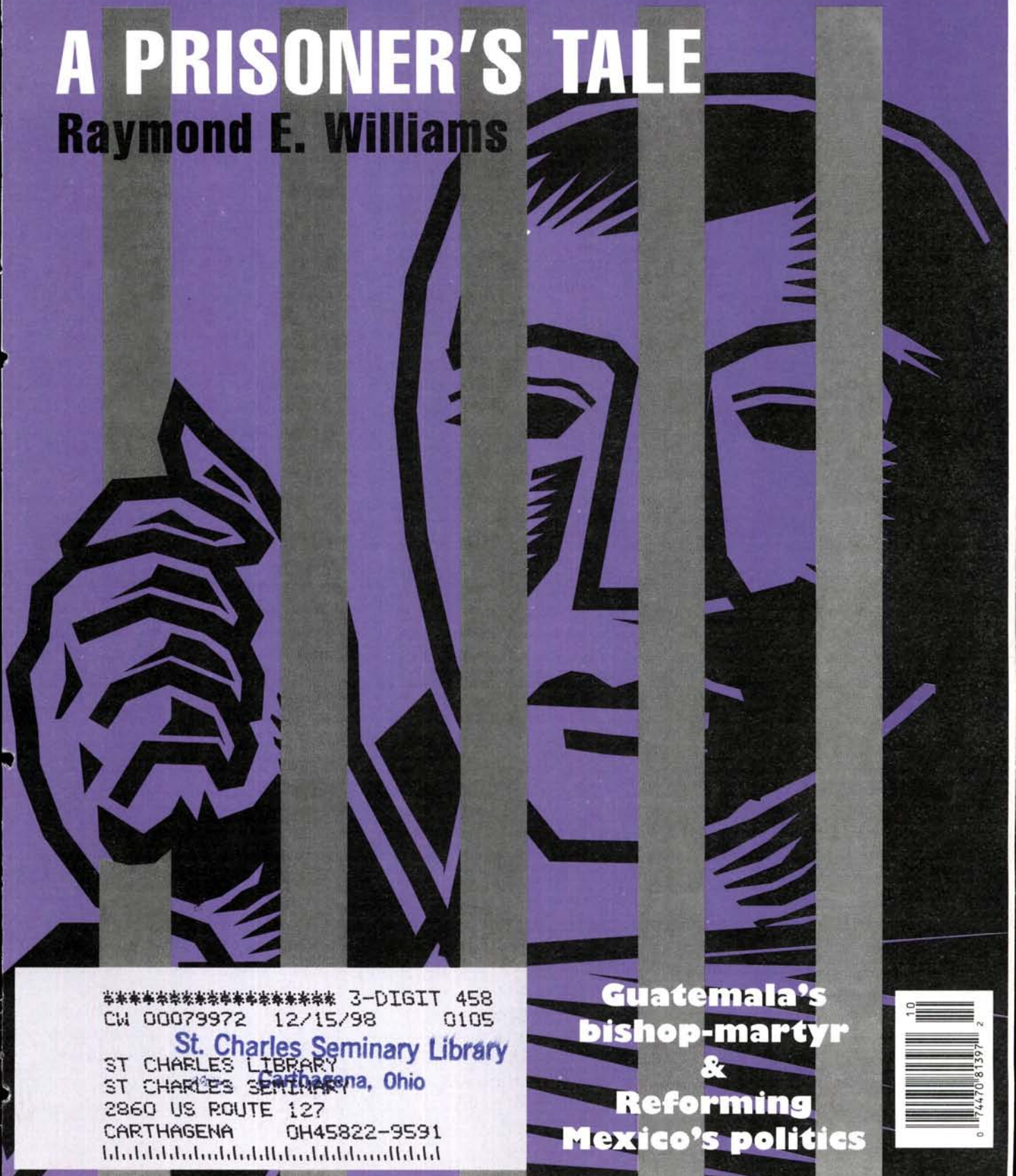
May 22, 1998

COMMONWEAL

A PRISONER'S TALE

Raymond E. Williams



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Guatemala's bishop-martyr & Reforming Mexico's politics

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To the Editors

Revisionist Latin

No matter what anybody says, you'll always be my favorite demotic rag. Only...could you admonish whoever wrote the headline on the lead-off letter in the Correspondence section for April 24? The headline ["*Estne tu Romano*?"] contains two errors in a three-word sentence: The verb that starts the sentence is put into the third person when it should be in the second, and the final word is in the dative or ablative case when it should be in the nominative; thus: "*Esne tu Romanus*?"

That's an error density too low to seem genially impudent, and just high enough to appear inexcusably careless. Then again, maybe this is a breakthrough into postmodernist Latin. Let's see; does it translate into "Is he she it you to or by means of a Roman male?" When leading-edge Latin is published, *Commonweal* will publish it.

JULIAN IRIAS
San Francisco, Calif.

From the editors: Delendus est Irias!

No, Polish-ed Latin

I want my favorite magazine to be right always, but sometimes you make it hard. For example, the first letter to the editors in the April 24 issue is headed: "*Esne tu Romano*?" At first I presumed that this was intended to be Latin for "Are you Roman?" But that would be "*Esne tu Romanus*?"

So, knowing your inerrancy, I realized there must be a subtle explanation. What is the most subtle Indo-European language? Polish, of course! And, whereas in most languages the verb "to be" takes the nominative case (as in *Romanus*), Polish often uses the instrumental, which corresponds to the ablative in Latin (as in *Romano*). For example, in Polish the word "American" is "*Amerikanski*" (nominative). But "Are you [an] American?" is "*Jestes Amerikaninem*?" (instrumental).

So now it's clear: By using Polish grammar in a Latin sentence you were slyly sending the message that you are not only Roman, but Polish-papal!

Nitpickers may grumble about the use of "*estne*" instead of "*esne*." But everyone is aware that in most languages the use of the third person verb is a common polite usage, as in "Does Your Honor agree?"

Incidentally, this also explains why some people misread the pope. His Polish mind is too subtle for them.

(REV.) EDWARD BLIVEN
Portland, Ore.

Let it all hang out

I want to affirm, thank, and congratulate you for publishing the CTSA critiques/responses [March 27] and the many interesting responses thereto [Correspondence, April 24]. Despite the impassioned pleading of Professors Tilley and Zagano ["Wrong venue"], I want to stress the very practical importance of presenting such contrasting views in "popular journals" such as *Commonweal*. On the basis of researching Catholic schools, parish religious education, and lay ministry locally and nationally for many years, and of teaching in a Catholic school and several parish religious education programs and attending dozens of national conferences, I can confidently predict the following "worst-case scenario" that would follow if the course advocated by Tilley and Zagano were to be adopted:

Yes, the "respectful investigation by professionals" of Gary Macy's plenary address at the CTSA convention proceeds apace and is submitted to refereed journals for publication in the 1999-2000 academic year. Meantime, however, copies of Macy's paper dealing with "spiritual communion" are being discussed in graduate school classes led by members of CTSA who had given it "unalloyed approval." The "multiple constructions" of the address envisioned by Professor Michael Slusser in his letter ["Master Macy"] might well be included in the graduate seminars. Very soon, however, the more politically attractive and provocative aspects of the address, the theological equivalent of sound bites, will find their way into presentations in undergraduate classrooms (reaching hundreds of potential catechists) and then into talks at summer institutes, the Los Angeles Religious Education Convention, and the NCEA convention (reaching hundreds of actual catechists). And next spring I am certain that one of my teen-agers will pass on what she has been told by her religion teacher or parish Confirmation preparation leader—Catholic theologians now recognize that spiritual communion on the ski slopes of the Cascade Mountains is equal to or better than participation in the eucharistic liturgy and reception of Communion.

In constructing this scenario, I could have used any one of the reported CTSA addresses. I'm sure this is not the outcome envisioned by any of the speakers, nor will it be the conclusion of the professional theologians arguing fine points among their peers—but it is the likely result for many teachers exposed to limited information. To wish to discourage (or forbid?) informed, several-sided discussion of the issues in more accessible and "real time" publications like *Commonweal* (as Tilley and Zagano seem to favor) would deny on-the-line teachers the opportunity to learn that there is disagreement, that a plenary address does not equate to a church teaching, that a sound bite doesn't convey a complete picture. Whether the theologians like it or not, their speculative presentations at professional gatherings all too often and all too soon become the theologi-

(Continued on page 4)

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COMMONWEAL

May 22, 1998 / Volume CXXV, Number 10

UPFRONT

Correspondence *Lessons in Latin; more on the state of theology.* 2

Editorial *Author & engine* 5
Throw out the clowns 6

COLUMNISTS

Frontline shows a blind spot
John Garvey
PBS notices religion—of a certain sort. 7

Pol Pot's legacy
William Pfaff
He had helpers, among them us. 8

SHORT TAKES

Guatemala Report
Stephen Privett
A bishop, murdered for his human rights work, is mourned and buried. His cause lives on. 9

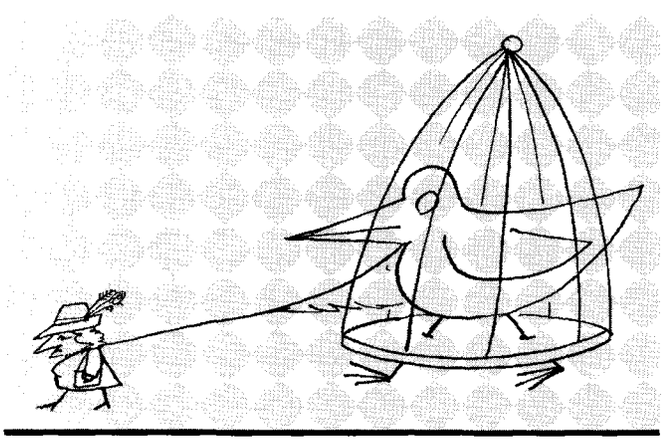
Report from Mexico
George W. Grayson 10

Celibacy at all costs?
William F. Jabusch
People need priests. Who will they be? 11

ARTICLES

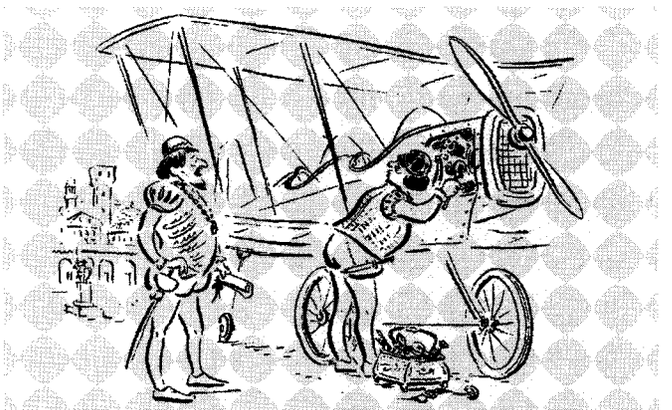
A PRISONER'S TALE
Raymond E. Williams
Medical care behind bars: even worse than an HMO. 13

THE BISHOPS' RIGHT-HAND WOMAN
Margaret O'Brien Steinfels 16



VERDICTS

BOOKS



"I'm afraid I have bad news about the research and development appropriations."

The Wealth and Poverty of Nations
by David S. Landes
Margaret O'Brien Steinfels 19

Twilight on the Line
by Sebastian Rotella
Joseph A. Page 21

Wild Thoughts from Wild Places
by David Quammen
Clare Collins 22

The Gospel of the Beloved Disciple
by James P. Carse
Ed Block, Jr. 24

Real Politics
by Jean Bethke Elshtain
Patrick J. Deneen 27

POETRY

What would you like to be when you grow up?
Marie Ponsot 26

THE LAST WORD

The orthodoxy police
Peter Feuerherd
A journalist asks why he is no longer wanted at the National Catholic Register 31

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(Continued from page 2)

cal certainties presented by the classroom teacher.

A wider discussion, not a narrower one, seems called for. Thank you for providing a forum. MARY BETH CELIO

Seattle, Wash.

The writer is director of research in the Office of Planning and Research of the Archdiocese of Seattle.

A community of faith

I have read with interest the articles [March 27] by Sister Mary Ann Donovan, Father Avery Dulles, S.J., and Peter Steinfels on the annual meeting of the Catholic Theological Society of America held in June 1997.

The Eucharist is central to Roman Catholicism, and truly defines us as a eucharistic people. Theologians are to be commended for continuing the church's efforts to articulate ever more deeply and fully its eucharistic faith—a task that needs to be done in each age.

In carrying forward this effort, some disagreement is unavoidable. But how we treat disagreements among us speaks loudly to the entire world about the depth of our faith and our trust in the Holy Spirit working within the church.

The bishops of the United States adopted a comprehensive document setting forth principles and processes by which bishops and theologians, who may have differences, can be reconciled. Approved by the bishops in June 1989, "Doctrinal Responsibilities: Approaches to Promoting Harmony and Resolving Misunderstandings between Bishops and Theologians" remains a remarkable resource document as well as a guide for the resolution of difficulties and disagreements. Its procedure for formal doctrinal dialogue is a splendid model for others within the church. A less formal but equally important model for dialogue is offered by the Catholic Common Ground Initiative.

If the bishops of our country can adopt and implement principles and guidelines to promote harmony and to resolve misunderstandings between ourselves and theologians, I am hopeful that our Catholic theologians might be able to develop similar principles and guidelines to assist them in their vital role for the good of the church.

Would not the concluding words of "Doctrinal Responsibilities" become an opportune path for theological scholarship and dialogue as well:

We believe that, with the guidance of the Spirit, the many different parts of the Body of Christ can be knit together in justice and love and thereby become more truly themselves before God. In seeking clear and equitable ways to resolve disagreements about our faith, we recommit ourselves to being a church that is one and open, a genuine community of faith sharing the truth freely given to it.

CARDINAL ROGER MAHONY

Los Angeles

The CTSA's task

As chair of the CTSA committee which drafted "Tradition and the Ordination of Women," I want to correct a distortion in Matthew Lamb's letter [Correspondence, April 24]. The task of the committee was not to refute the Vatican document. Instead, the CTSA board asked the committee to answer, in light of the *Responsum* by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the question, "What is the theological status of the tradition about women's ordination, and by what criteria is this arrived at?" This we did, to the best of our abilities. The remark which Professor Lamb uses to accuse Sister Mary Ann Donovan of making a false claim about the committee's work was based on a single misstatement by a committee member who explicitly corrected it during the subsequent public discussion. JON NILSON

Chicago, Ill.

The writer is associate professor of theology at Loyola University Chicago.

Paying the price

After reading the many letters in the April 24 issue concerning the flap over the CTSA, my eyes were drawn to the Last Word essay, "There goes the church," by Virginia Aultman-Moore. One could not have asked for a more poignant juxtaposition: While academics contend over the ordination question, the people in small towns like Pursglove pay the ultimate price for the failure of the hierarchy to respond pastorally to the spiritual needs of the faithful.

I am surprised that there is so little comment on the connection among the shortage of priests, the restriction of ordination to celibate males, and the debate over whether the ordained ministry as historically understood is, in the end, necessary. Saint Peter's somewhat rhetorical question—"Who will grudge us the water to baptize these [uncircumcised] men who have received the Spirit just as we have?"—comes to mind here. Can anyone doubt that if Peter had resisted the Spirit, Cornelius would have found a home elsewhere in the embryonic Christian community? Likewise, if the pope and his advisers continue to insist that the mandate of Christ, "Do this in memory of me," must be subservient to the requirement of celibacy, can they be surprised if hunger for the Eucharist and the healing sacraments of reconciliation and anointing causes people to consider alternative understandings of the ontological and ecclesial foundations of ordained ministry?

LARRY HANSEN

Aloha, Oregon

Welcome to William Pfaff

What a treat to find William Pfaff in *Commonweal*. I am exposed to his well-reasoned world view only on those too rare occasions when I can get the *International Herald Tribune*. His thoughtful opinions are a healthy antidote to the screamers and shouters

(Continued on page 28)

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Author & engine

In preparation for the jubilee year 2000, the Roman Catholic church has set aside 1998 as a year of prayer and reflection on the Holy Spirit. It is a theological commonplace to note that the Western church has failed in important ways to articulate or appreciate the power and person of the Holy Spirit. (*Spiritus* is Latin for *ruah*, "breath" in Hebrew: "The breath of his mouth put all things in place"—Wisdom 32:6.) Too often the Spirit has simply been taken for granted, the forgotten member of the Trinity, relegated in practical theology and worship to third place in a hierarchy of divine being.

To be sure, the concept of the Holy Spirit is inherently esoteric. In this regard, Walter Kasper, the German bishop and theologian, notes that while the Son appeared in human form and we can make at least a mental image of the Father, the Spirit is not so immediately "graphic." Western art has traditionally depicted the third person of the Trinity in the form of Pentecostal fire or of a baptismal dove—images based on the New Testament that do attest to the Spirit's power and freedom. But like all metaphors for God, these images are only approximations. The Spirit's "real presence" is both more ubiquitous and more elusive, for the Spirit is preeminently at work in the lives of God's people, in the communion of his church. That mysterious reality, whereby the Spirit, always understood within the unity of the Trinity, can be seen as both the object and the agent of faith—both author and engine of salvation history—is perhaps best captured in the Nicene Creed. Every Sunday Catholics profess their belief in the Holy Spirit in words that both describe his nature and his worldly manifestations: ``We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.''

In the effort to reclaim a better understanding of the Holy Spirit, there is a natural tendency to separate the three persons of the Trinity. That tendency must be resisted. As Yves Congar insisted, Jesus the Incarnate Word cannot be separated from the Spirit. Just as it is Jesus who shows us the Father, it is the Spirit who reveals Jesus to us—and vice versa—so that "it is possible to attribute the effects of grace to either one or the other." Jesus ascends to the right hand of the Father precisely to send the Spirit, without whose intervention we cannot understand who Jesus is. It is the Spirit—paradigmatically present in the revelation at Pentecost—who teaches us the meaning of Jesus.

Similarly, as Paul noted in Romans, when we pray, it is the Spirit praying in us. In the liturgy, it is the power of the Spirit that transforms the bread and wine and thus the community. The Spirit actively extends the *koinonia* (communion) of the church, drawing in outsiders (see Acts 10). And in every age it is the saints who most graphically embody the action of the Spirit, helping us to see the trinitarian God renewing both church and world. Robert Ellsberg's recent study, *All Saints* (Crossroad), eloquently shows how varied, vital, and challenging their lives are, and how God addresses us through them.

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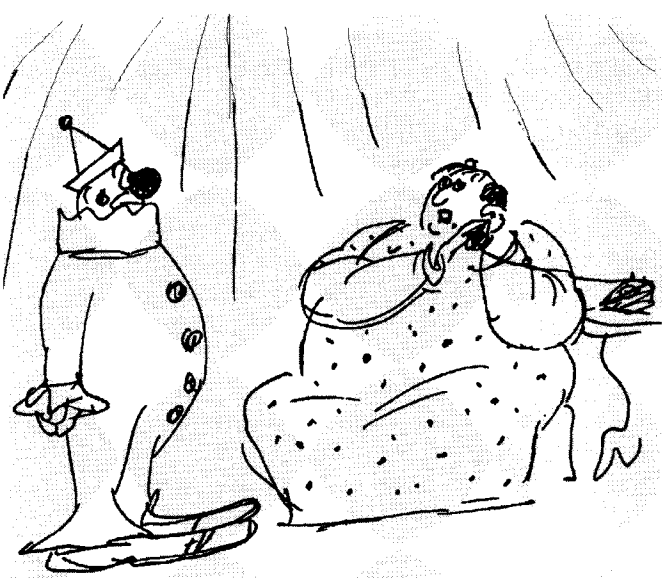
Looking toward the next millennium, we should take stock of the Holy Spirit's presence in this otherwise most destructive of centuries. Clearly, Vatican II stands out as a striking manifestation of the Spirit at work. While the council's documents refer to the Spirit more than 250 times, more remarkable still was the council's tenor of openness and hope. As a consequence, the church committed itself to renewing the life of holiness: as manifest in its liturgy; in works of justice and solidarity with the poor; in the inviolability of conscience; in authority exercised as a charism of service; in redressing historic failures; and in reaching out to other churches, faiths, and people of good will. The church's subsequent encounters with Orthodoxy, with Judaism, and with mystical traditions, East and West, as well as the rich ferment within its own house from the competing insights of traditionalists, liberationists, feminists, and charismatics, all attest to the Spirit's presence. To live with this open-ended reality, while avoiding the temptation to retreat to previous but now inadequate securities, will be a test for both hope and inspired wit.

THROW OUT THE CLOWNS

"The first time as tragedy, the second as farce," so said Karl Marx contrasting Napoleon's 1799 seizure of power in France to that of Louis Bonaparte in 1851. Though the bloody details are missing, the analogy fits our current situation. Whitewater is to Watergate as farce is to tragedy. Watergate was a political drama that transfixed the nation, slowly building to its denouement—the disgraced Richard Nixon's offering a stiff-armed salute from an airplane door. Whitewater is a vaudeville show with clowns tumbling onto the stage for brief appearances; it is farce verging on soap opera.



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Richard Nixon now seems a tragic character fatefully caught up in his own paranoia and machinations, ensnared in the traps he laid for others. The slow unraveling of his presidency was governed by constitutional procedures with a Congress and party system capable of restraint as evidence of his treachery accumulated. Members of Congress had to be convinced, and only when convinced did they indict. Nixon resigned rather than undergo trial. Before his death, he managed to rehabilitate himself in some measure because the Constitution provided a process for an investigation and his political friends judiciously urged him from office, thus making the system whole again.

Today, we see the consequences of a system largely without procedures and men without restraint. Four years and tens of millions of dollars have produced no indictment of Bill Clinton in the Whitewater case. Independent counsel Kenneth Starr closed his investigation before the Little Rock grand jury by hauling back Susan McDougall, in shackles and prison garb, and by indicting, for the second time, Webster Hubbell, this time along with his wife, his accountant, and his lawyer. McDougall and Hubbell are crooks, but they have served their time and their crimes were peripheral to the primary investigation. The appearance of McDougall and the indictment of Hubbell produced nothing, except perhaps an implicit threat to the yet-to-be-indicted Monica Lewinsky. With a grand jury sitting in Washington, the independent counsel now focuses on sexual scandal, perjury, and suborning witnesses, charges originally rising from the Paula Jones case, thrown out of court two months ago.

Meanwhile, the Republican Congress plays to its groundlings, releasing ineptly (perhaps fraudulently) edited transcripts of conversations taped while Hubbell was in prison. Representative Dan Burton (R-Ind.), when called to account for this selective editing, gets even and releases all the tapes. His Republican colleagues pretend fury, and his committee's chief investigator is tossed off stage. Meanwhile Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich struts about whispering of crime in the White House and impeachment of the president.

We have farce instead of tragedy because no limits are imposed on the clowns. The extra-Constitutional office of independent counsel is one cause of this interminable nonsense. There being few limits on what Starr can investigate means there are no limits to what partisans like Burton and Gingrich will try to do, and thus no limits to what Clinton will do in repulsing their attacks.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we are paying these people good money for a very bad show. Bring back the Constitution.

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JOHN GARVEY

FRONTLINE SHOWS A BLIND SPOT

PBS's 'From Jesus to Christ'

There was a recent two-part edition of "Frontline," the PBS program, called "From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians." The title indicated a bit of the show's bias, which is a current fashionable line in scholarship—the idea that Jesus was "made" the Christ, the anointed one, by the community which had to deal, after his death, with everything his life and death had meant, including a resurrection with which many of our contemporaries are terribly uncomfortable, as well they might be. There are any number of hidden and not-so-hidden assumptions here.

It was good to see a presentation of church history on public television, even with the bias, which became more clear in the second episode. The fact is that PBS made a somewhat serious attempt at looking at the beginning of Christianity, and the producers gave us more time and space than might have been expected for anything that was potentially so controversial. They managed to avoid the controversy and the discussion needed to make the discussion *truly* serious, but people who complain that public broadcasting gives too little time and attention to religion have to take this effort into account.

Nevertheless, the series reveals a tendency in a lot of modern religious thinking to read the image of the church as we would like it to be, or think it should be, back into the early years of the church. As far as Christ is concerned, the series began, "every age has done its own interpretation. Now it's our turn." And how. And how neatly the series reflected our *Zeitgeist*, more than that of the period in question. Much of the history was there, but without the sense of the strangeness, the otherness, of a time we must strain to understand.

Some forms of popular journalism must rely on the grave generalization: "Historians believe it more likely that Jesus was born and raised in Nazareth" than in Bethlehem—but is this *all* historians? No contrary voices? No qualifications? "Very few scholars believe that Jesus was of such lowly birth...." All right, so far.

But then we bump into the familiar notion that the early church, having had a sense of Jesus' continuing relevance even after his death, embellishes the experience into a resurrection tale. This is a form of rationalist fundamentalism at least as intellectually objectionable as biblical literalism, since it has nothing to do with the text, or with anything that can be demonstrated. It can only be said to reflect the distaste of people who are offended by the idea that the Resurrection might refer to something real, in a way that makes a claim on us. "The community experiences an absent Jesus," we are told, and the Gospels turn this into the story of the Resurrection.

And of course by the time we get to Constantine, the party line is clear: Constantine persecutes gnostics, dualists, Marcionites, in order to create one church, which is meant to reflect one empire. The pluralism and diversity which characterized the early "Jesus movement" have been replaced by orthodoxy.

What is striking is the way this reads the concerns of a certain sort of post-modern liberal Protestantism back into ancient history. We are asked to see a church which at first was less concerned with consensus about the meaning of the crucified Messiah and his Resurrection than with all the possible ways of reacting to the excitement caused by a rabbi whose teachings were subject to instant distortion, about which lots of people had lots of different opinions. This ignores Paul and Acts, but it does reflect our times.

Elaine Pagels did the same sort of thing in *The Gnostic Gospels* (Random House, 1979). It struck me, reading Pagels, that despite her claim that the Nag Hammadi manuscripts reveal all sorts of new things about gnostic belief, she relies in her footnotes almost entirely on Irenaeus (one of the old boys) for her account of gnostic doctrine; she also said that the Thomas Christians of India are so-called because of their reliance on such gnostic books as the Gospel of Thomas. That is a real howler: the Oriental Orthodox Christians of South India have no reliance on the Gospel of Thomas. They believe that their church was founded by the apostle—hence the name. No matter: mainstream reviewers raved, neglecting to notice the conventional footnotes and the amateur history, because it was nice to think of the gnostics as proto-feminists who had been crushed by patriarchal imperialists. "Frontline" no doubt met the same sort of reception with a lot of people, and for similarly shallow reasons.

It was good to see a serious treatment of religion on public television, but the bias was clear: John Dominic Crossan was there, but not Raymond Brown or Jaroslav Pelikan. The line of thought avoided studiously was that there is a living and relatively stable belief, and a continuing witness in Christian tradition from the time of the empty tomb until now, that what Paul proclaims in 1 Thessalonians, the oldest of the New Testament writings, is not only a metaphor, not only a consoling way of responding to a martyred leader, but true in a way we could not have imagined (and still cannot), and it changes everything. □

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WILLIAM PFAFF

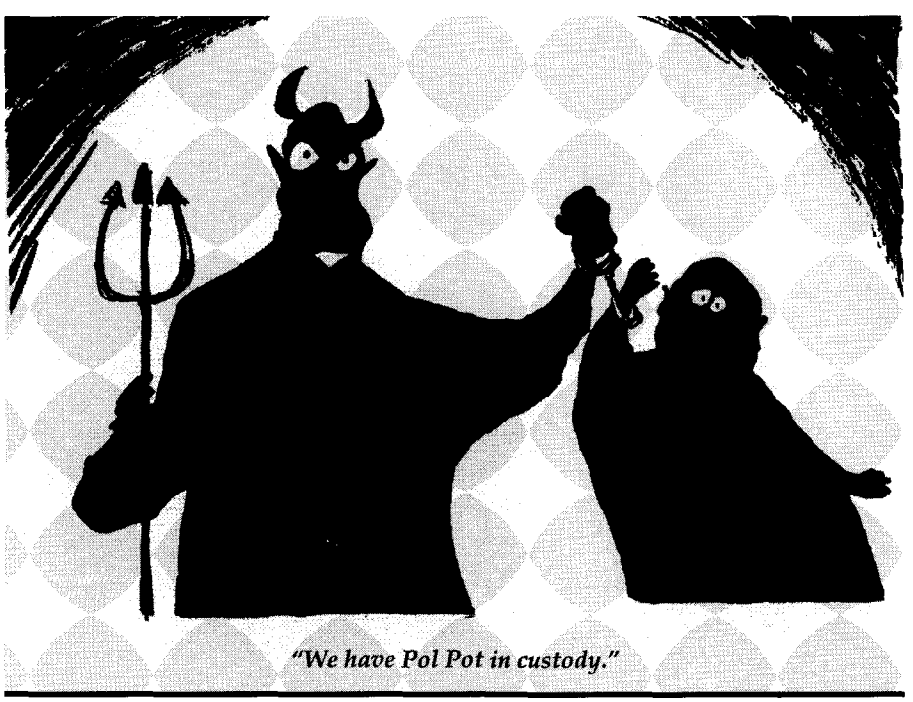
POL POT'S LEGACY

And the role played by the U.S.

The two million or so murders for which Pol Pot and his movement were responsible in Cambodia were inspired by a desire to surpass in revolutionary zeal the Chinese cultural revolution, so as to cleanse Cambodia of "all sorts of depraved cultures and social blemishes." A naive ideological vision of agrarian utopia, stripped of urban and bourgeois influences, was responsible for this genocidal program. It had been worked up in student leftist circles in Paris after World War II, and adopted by the man who later renamed himself Pol Pot. The principal author of the ideology, which he developed in the thesis he presented at the Sorbonne in the 1950s, is still alive, in the Cambodian forest. He is Khieu Samphan.

The Communist group Pol Pot joined on his return to Cambodia was a negligible force in the country's politics. It did not begin to prosper until Cambodia was swept toward the Vietnam War by North Vietnam's exploitation of Cambodian military weakness and the country's policy of neutrality with respect to that war. Hanoi developed routes inside Cambodia's frontiers to transport arms and supplies southward to the Viet Cong. In 1969 the United States began secretly to bomb those routes. The secret was kept from the American public, and from all but two or three senators, trusted by President Richard Nixon.

Subsequently the Nixon administration lent its approval to a military coup which overturned the neutralist government of Prince Norodom Sihanouk and installed a military dictatorship. In 1970 the United States and South Vietnam invaded Cambodia. That act of international illegality is described by William Bundy, who was at the time a supporter of the Vietnam War, as "indeed a black page in the history of American foreign policy." (This is in Bundy's forthcoming history of American policy under Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, *A Tangled Web* [Hill and Wang].)



"We have Pol Pot in custody."

The invasion proved futile: The North Vietnamese shifted their supply trails even deeper into Cambodia, whose new rulers were as incapable of stopping them as Prince Sihanouk had been. The American bombing campaign in 1969 had not primarily been meant to affect the military situation. According to Bundy, who was a CIA and State Department official in the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, the bombing was intended "above all as a demonstration to the Soviet Union that [President Nixon] was indeed capable of extreme and irrational response."

Nixon and his national security advisor, Henry Kissinger, believed that international communism was a structured and disciplined movement, and that the Vietnam War could be ended by intimidating Moscow and Beijing. The Cambodian victims of American actions were killed for a purpose that had nothing directly to do with Cambodia.

In the subsequent struggle, China backed Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge, while North Vietnam supported a less radical Communist faction. In the spring of 1972, North Vietnam launched a major offensive into South Vietnam, moving its forces out of frontier Cambodia, which left space for the Khmer Rouge to expand its influence. It went on to become the main threat to the American-supported government. "From 1973 on," Arnold Isaacs wrote in his 1983 book *Without Honor: Defeat in Vietnam and Cambodia*, "Cambodia seemed an entire country gone amok. All its psychological anchors were ripped loose in the hurricane of violence which had fallen upon it. American decisions and American bombs had helped destroy peacetime Cambodian life, and it is in that sense that some connection can be said to exist between American actions and the savagery of the Khmer Rouge."

American bombing of Cambodia was resumed in 1973, not because of anything the Cambodians had done, but as "punishment" for North Vietnamese violations of the peace agreement that had been signed by Kissinger and Le Duc Tho in Paris in January. Eighty thou-

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sand tons of bombs were dropped on the country during four months, until Congress forced the Nixon administration to stop. All were meant as "messages" to Hanoi, Beijing, or Moscow. All this produced a terrifying synthesis of forces. Destruction delivered with impunity from abroad awakened a native capacity for suicidal catharsis and renewal, provided by the ideologues of the Khmer Rouge. What happened in Cambodia between the fall of Phnom Penh in April 1975, and the Vietnamese invasion that stopped the Khmer Rouge terror in December 1978, had happened before.

From the twelfth century forward—after the immense temple complex of Angkor was built—a series of cataclysmic defensive and civil wars occurred in Cambodia that ended in ruined cities and partition of the country between Thais and Vietnamese. Norodom Sihanouk has himself said that "several times in the past, the Khmer people, who built Angkor, have demonstrated a morbid desire for mutual self-destruction." This time it was accomplished under the impulsion and with the complicity of the Vietnamese people, whom they have always hated and feared, under the influence of the Chinese, their overpowering neighbor, and under punishment from an American government, which as Bundy makes plain, had among its members absolutely no one who knew anything about Cambodia's society or history—or cared. □

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Stephen Privett

GUATEMALA REPORT

A bishop-martyr is buried

Thousands of Guatemalans watched on Wednesday, April 29, as the casket of Auxiliary Bishop Juan Gerardi Conedera was carried through the massive front doors of the Metropolitan Cathedral of Guatemala City. The bishop had been murdered at approximately 10 o'clock on Sunday evening as he stepped from his car to open the garage door. An assailant struck him on the head with a block of concrete and then dragged the bishop inside the garage where he pulverized his skull beyond recognition.

The funeral liturgy began promptly at 10 A.M. with a procession of hundreds of concelebrants, including twenty-five bishops representing the Episcopal Conferences of Canada, Mexico, the United States, and the countries of Latin and Central America. It took more than half an hour for the white-robed clergy to make their way through the crowds into the cathedral, down the aisle past the open casket of Bishop Gerardi, and into the sanctuary. Archbishop Prospero Penados del Barrio, who was flanked by the papal nuncio and the president of the Guatemalan Bishops Conference as be began the funeral rites, appeared almost numbed by the brutal murder of his auxiliary bishop.

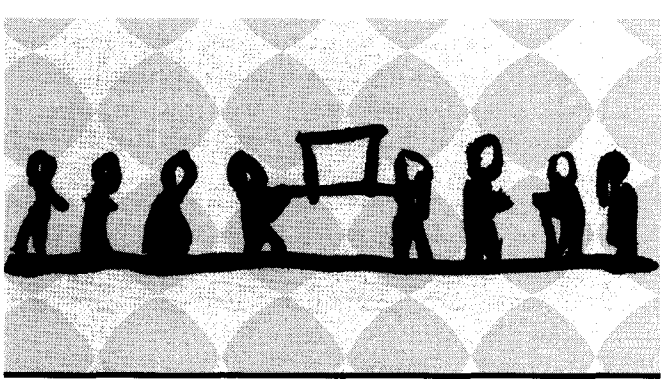
The previous Friday in the very cathedral where he is now interred, Bishop Gerardi presented the findings of the *Recuperacion de la Memoria Historica* (REHMI) project which he directed and coordinated.

REHMI was a church-sponsored effort to recover the historical memory of the victims of the worst repression during the armed conflict in Guatemala. The investigation focused on the most egregious assassinations and massacres, which accounted for only a fraction of the total number killed during the conflict. The study took three years and involved 600 investigators who used fifteen Mayan languages to speak with more than 6,500 witnesses. It described the deaths of 55,000 Guatemalans, 75 percent of whom were Mayan. The report indicted the Guatemalan army and its paramilitary spin-offs for 85 percent of those killings.

In addition to its historical findings, the report called for major changes to support the peace process. The recommendations included: economic and psychological restitution for victims' families; acceptance by the army, the government, and other armed units of full responsibility for the atrocities and human-rights violations they committed; revamping the judicial system; reform of the army to curtail its political and social influence and to restore civilian control; resolution of long-standing land ownership inequities; and appointment of international observers to monitor the peace process.

Bishop Gerardi was no stranger to violence and repression. As bishop of El Quiche, he had escaped two assassination attempts before being forced to leave the country in 1980 for exile in Costa Rica. He returned four years later as auxiliary bishop and vicar general of Guatemala City. In 1988 his fellow bishops selected him as one of their representatives on the Committee on National Reconciliation. In the late 1980s he worked to establish the Archdiocesan Office of Human Rights before assuming responsibility for REHMI in 1995.

When he publicly presented the report, Bishop Gerardi said that REHMI was "a painful denunciation that challenges each one of us to commit ourselves to action so that those abominable acts never happen again." He declared "that the



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search for truth does not end here. It must return from where it was born and it must support the role of memory as an instrument for social reconstruction...." If those behind the murder of Bishop Gerardi intended thereby to end "the search for truth" and halt "the social reconstruction" undertaken by the peace process, they are sorely disappointed. In a fiery funeral homily, Bishop Gerardo Flores of Verapaz repeated the Guatemalan Episcopal Conference's assertion that the murder was directly related to the role that Bishop Gerardi played in coordinating the REHMI project, publicizing its findings, and endorsing its recommendations: "for this reason they killed him, crushing his skull and destroying his face." It will be both ironic and appropriate if this murder produces a thorough and impartial investigation that brings perpetrators and plotters to justice and serves as the first step toward a Guatemala where truth and justice prevail over silence and impunity.

The most moving and inspiring moment of the two-hour liturgy came at the conclusion of the homily when Bishop Flores in a booming bass voice promised Guatemalans "that the day will soon be here when the people will cry and sing, *Guatemala, Guatemala: nunca mas* [never again]." The responsive applause echoed like thunder off the walls of the cathedral for a full ten minutes. This observer had the sense that people shared the martyred bishop's belief, expressed the previous Friday, that the work of REHMI, the promotion of justice and peace, is "a beautiful service of veneration for the martyrs and a dignifying of the victims of destruction and death."

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George W. Grayson

REPORT FROM MEXICO

Open primaries for the PRI

Political murders, drug trafficking, police corruption, and the ongoing civil strife in Chiapas continue to dominate the headlines about Mexico in United States newspapers. It would be foolish to minimize the serious nature of these problems. Still, Mexico is also undergoing a slow but real political evolution that promises to bring more democratic and responsive government to a country that has known only one-party rule for nearly seven decades.

The nomadic Somalis have forty-five names for the camel because of the dromedary's crucial role in their lives. Similarly, Mexicans have a caravan of words to condemn corrupt practices perfected by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) during its sixty-nine-year reign. *Dedazo* (naming of candidates by party bigshots), *alquimistas* (election fixers), *carrusel* (multiple voting by one person), *mordida* (bribe)—these words glisten in the lexicon of this nation's cynical citizens.

Recent electoral reforms advocated by Mexico's President Ernesto Zedillo have enabled voters to punish the PRI, his own party, for its history of graft, nepotism, and venality. Last July, for instance, Zedillo-backed innovations allowed the people rather than the chief executive to decide upon Mexico City's mayor. They responded by opting for PRI defector Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas (47 percent), nominee of the leftist-nationalist Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) over the standard-bearers of the PRI (25 percent) and the center-right National Action Party or PAN (15 percent). Cárdenas is now regarded as a serious threat to defeat the PRI nominee and succeed Zedillo as president in the 2000 election.

Moreover, last July the PRI lost its hammerlock on the 500-member Chamber of Deputies as the PRD, PAN, and minor parties collectively amassed 262 seats. Nonetheless, the PRI managed to maintain a 76-52 grip on the stodgy upper house because only one-fourth of the Senate stood for election.

This year voters in fourteen of Mexico's 31 states will elect governors and/or mayors. Encouraged by the remarkable openness of the 1997 contests, Ricardo Monreal Avila—the PRI's number-two man in the Chamber of Deputies, a former senator, and an attractive progressive with broad intra-party backing—began barnstorming the north-central state of Zacatecas with an eye to capturing the statehouse. His ambition raised the hackles of PRI power broker Genaro Borrego, a former party president and ex-governor of Zacatecas, who now runs Mexico's social security system. Before Monreal knew what hit him, he had mysteriously lost his bid to a so-called "unity candidate" backed by the influential Borrego. To add insult to injury, current PRI president Mariano Palacios Alcocer implied—with no proof at all—that the popular Monreal had ties to narco-traffickers.

Outraged, Monreal bolted the PRI to accept the gubernatorial nomination of the left-nationalist PRD. Although the contest doesn't take place until August 2, recent polls show Monreal as the odds-on favorite. If these findings hold up, the PRD will boast its first state executive. At the same time, the right-leaning PAN, which already claims six governorships, savors the possibility of obtaining several more.

Faced with Monreal's defection and evident popularity, PRI operatives began having second thoughts about the party's top-down nomination process. Amid this soul-searching came the need to select a PRI nominee in Chihuahua, a huge, PAN-controlled state which shares a border with Texas. Artemio Iglesias Miramontes emerged as the candidate of the PRI's old guard. But the hard-living, unsavory Iglesias seemed destined for defeat, particularly if nominated by *dedazo*. Thus, Jesús Manuel Pérez Piñon, a savvy PRI strategist with electoral experience in a half-dozen states, suggested a revolutionary nominating mechanism: an open *consulta* or primary in which all Chihuahuans could participate! What was there to lose? he reasoned. Fearing defeat, the PRI state leadership agreed, and Iglesias—while privately grumbling about such a process—followed suit lest he admit fear over entering a fair fight.

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"We each pick a number out of the hat—we'll soon see who is numero uno!"

The PRI National Executive Committee held its collective breath when the polls opened on primary day, March 8; by nightfall, it was celebrating a political coup. Deputy Patricio Martínez García, a moderate, well-liked accountant and rancher from Chihuahua city, had garnered 54 percent of the vote, to defeat Iglesias (35 percent) and a third contender.

Thus, in one fell swoop, the PRI (1) selected a probable winner, (2) involved a quarter-million people from across the political spectrum in its selection process, and (3) conveyed a message both to the country at large and to its own militants that their Tammany Hall-style party could embrace more democratic procedures and still come out on top. Before the open primary in Chihuahua, the PRI acted like a condemned prisoner waiting for the hangman. The Chihuahua results gave the deeply riven PRI a mission—namely, holding open primaries in four PRI-governed states where the party had yet to select its standard-bearers: Sinaloa, Tlaxcala, Tamaulipas, and Puebla.

If conducted honestly, primaries will enhance the legitimacy of PRI candidates in general elections, according to public-opinion surveys. But even if the party suffers a setback or two, allowing the sun to blaze in on its nominating process will affect its future in several positive ways:

- Give greater substance to President Zedillo's insistence that a local version of glasnost complement the economic liberalization that he has championed;
- Weaken further PRI oldtimers or "dinosaurs"—concentrated in the party's labor and peasant sectors—who prefer finagling vote tallies to winning the hearts and minds of the electorate; and
- Set the stage for a wide-open contest for the PRI presidential nomination, featuring a half-dozen aspirants.

In view of the potent impact that primaries could have on the party, it remains to be seen whether current PRI governors—accustomed to treating their states as fiefdoms—will work under the new rules. And even if the primaries are conducted fairly, the now-popular Zedillo and now-unpopular PRI could still lose ground if oil revenues—responsible for 39 percent of the federal budget—continue to plummet. That would dampen Mexico's impressive economic recovery, forcing additional cutbacks in popular social programs. Failure to curb the escalating crime rate could also cost the PRI dearly at the polls.

Although no panacea for the party's fortunes either this year or in the 2000 presidential race, unfettered primaries offer the last best chance for the PRI to recover—in part, at least—from the defections and defeats endured in recent years. Who knows? If the world's longest continuously ruling party actually implements intramural democracy, the use of words, long dormant—for example—*legitimidad* (legitimacy), *esperanza* (hope), and *credibilidad* (credibility)—may reappear in the political vocabulary of Mexicans.

George W. Grayson *teaches government at the College of William and Mary. He has just published* Mexico: From Corporatism to Pluralism *(Harcourt-Brace) as well as* A Guide to the 1998 Mexican Elections *(Center for Strategic & International Studies).*

William F. Jabusch

CELIBACY AT ALL COSTS?

A college chaplain asks why

Chris is a young man concerned about getting into a good medical school. Frankly, I don't think he has anything to worry about. He has had straight A's, even when he took physics, chemistry, and Latin in the same quarter. Jim, on the other hand, has already been accepted at several law schools, including Notre Dame. His first choice, however, would be to stay here at the University of Chicago.

I came upon the two of them discussing not law or medicine but what had been their original interest, the Catholic priesthood. Both had reluctantly put aside that calling since it would mean not having a wife or children. Why, they wondered, was celibacy still required when married Episcopalian clergy are being ordained as Catholic priests and, right here in Chicago, we already have married Ukrainian Catholic priests?

I am sorry to say that I did not have a good answer. And I suspect that many other university chaplains have talked with generous, devout, and highly intelligent young men who had seriously considered becoming priests but turned away for one major reason.

After forty years in the priesthood I am not unaware of the advantages of celibacy. There are difficult assignments which

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a man would hesitate to accept if his wife and children would suffer deprivation or be in danger. Priests' salaries would have to be doubled or tripled. And the Protestant experience shows that wives and children are often not happy with what is expected of the pastor's family. Sometimes it is the other way round: I know of a Methodist minister who was removed from his church, not because of his performance but because the congregation widely detested his wife. And of course there are divorces, some of them rather messy.

Also there is the argument of "sign value." Celibacy is a sign of the heavenly kingdom and the priest is witness to spiritual values that contradict the materialism of the world. It is difficult to know how many today find this to be cogent, but there is no doubt that it has historical and theological weight. Still, we know that validly ordained married priests are now serving in Roman Catholic parishes and chaplaincies in the United States, England, and Germany. And thousands of other validly ordained men have been doing so for centuries in Orthodox churches throughout the world. Their ministry is respected and appreciated by their people, who do not seem especially concerned about a lack of "sign value." These people are, however, deeply interested in having a pastor to baptize, preach the gospel, lift up the sinful, and celebrate the Holy Eucharist.

In a number of rural areas in the world, Catholics have not had such a person for some time. It is common in the American West for a pastor to put hundreds of miles on his car as he dashes through deserts and across mountains in an effort to offer Mass in four or five different parishes. The diocese of Dodge City, for example, sprawls across twenty-eight counties in southwest Kansas. The bishop has closed six parishes and will probably close ten more by 2005. By then there will be twenty-four priests serving 13,700 households in forty-one parishes.

But it is certainly not only rural America that is hurting. The diocese of Innsbruck, Austria, which includes the whole of Tyrol, ordained no one in 1996, and pastors over seventy-five are persuaded to stay on. Polish friends tell me that the numbers entering Polish seminaries have rapidly declined now that there are many new opportunities for bright, ambitious young men.

In other places, especially in the big cities, there is still a priest-pastor in most parishes. But as the older generation retires, becomes infirm, or dies, younger and younger men are assigned as pastors of huge parishes with thousands of families. They live alone in rectories built for four or five priests, shop for frozen TV dinners or cans of soup, and eat alone watching television news. While the average age of the clergy is now over sixty, the average age of pastors has declined. Men only a few years ordained are given heavy pastoral responsibilities. With little experience they face the financial and societal problems of inner-city parishes and, to no one's surprise, are frequently burnt-out after a few years of frustration, loneliness, and hyperactivity. When we were seminarians I remember our elderly Jesuit spiritual director warning us to beware of "Punch and Judy" (whiskey and women). I wonder if today the problems are rather a numbing weariness, a deadly loneliness, and a sense of pessimism and failure.

Older priests understandably look forward to retirement. They know they do not have the energy and health they once had and which are needed for a vigorous parish ministry. But they do not see anyone ready to take their places. We have, as someone said in an athletic metaphor, no "bench," no replacements, no one prepared to step in and carry on. Seminarians are already "rare birds," and priests themselves have started to feel like an endangered species.

According to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University, the number of priests in the United States has dropped 15 percent in the last thirty years. The number of new priests being ordained has also dropped, from 994 in 1965 to 522 in 1995. But even this dramatic decrease does not tell the full, sad story, for the number of American Catholics has risen by 33 percent!

One does not need a crystal ball to see the future. In spite of urgent prayers, in spite of eager young priests assigned as "vocational directors," in spite of full-color posters and special recruitment retreats for college students, the number of interested candidates is not sufficient. More parishes will be closed. Can some be kept open with nonordained pastors? Perhaps, but nuns have disappeared even faster than the clergy, and qualified lay people are still in short supply.

The Catholic church has the noble mission of "handing on" the gospel to successive generations. It is not allowed to dilute it or change it. It is an institution that venerates tradition. But the church also has the task of pastoral care, of ministry, and ministry, of necessity, must adapt to the conditions of those who are to be served. But must it also adapt, at least to some extent, to the felt needs of the ministers? Today many potential and actual ministers do not feel called to a celibate life. For them, celibacy does not "speak" in a convincing or even a healthy way.

Constitution 50 of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) states that a change in discipline (*statuta humana*) may be called for by a change in "the times." Such an adjustment is indicated when there is urgent necessity or obvious usefulness (*urgens necessitas vel evidens utilitas*). Is that now the case with the discipline of celibacy? Is it time for one of the "appropriate emendations" Pope John XXIII spoke of when on October 11, 1962, he opened the first session of Vatican II?

Many feel there will be no change. They say that the present pope has no interest in this subject. The bishops, both in Europe and in the Americas, seem timid and hesitate to provoke any Vatican unhappiness. Curial officials, rejoicing in their own celibacy, seem to see the priest and seminarian shortage as a passing problem caused by Western decadence and selfishness. So, we are told, nothing will change.

But I am not so sure. I still remember being certain I would never celebrate Mass in English facing the people. However, "never say never." □

Reverend Willard F. Jabusch *is the director of Calvert House, the Catholic Student Center at the University of Chicago.*

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A PRISONER'S TALE

Bad medicine

Raymond E. Williams

A large prison complex, like the one in which I was incarcerated until recently in Arizona, has several units, each with its own set of facilities and interior fences. As some inmates are moved from maximum- to medium- and eventually to minimum-security units, they are seen by different doctors for a variety of minor ailments. Those like myself who develop more serious problems are seen by specialists outside the prison after being referred to them by the prison unit doctors. In this way prison health care works like HMOs and other health-care systems that require patients to be seen by a primary caregiver before the system will pay for a visit to the specialist. The cost of the extended care must be approved by the nonmedical staff.

For the most part I have found that the doctors and nurses in the prison units are just as capable and compassionate as those on the outside. But there the comparison ends. My recent experiences with the health care provided by the prison system may well serve as an example of what can be expected from a health-care bureaucracy that treats everyone as just another computer entry.

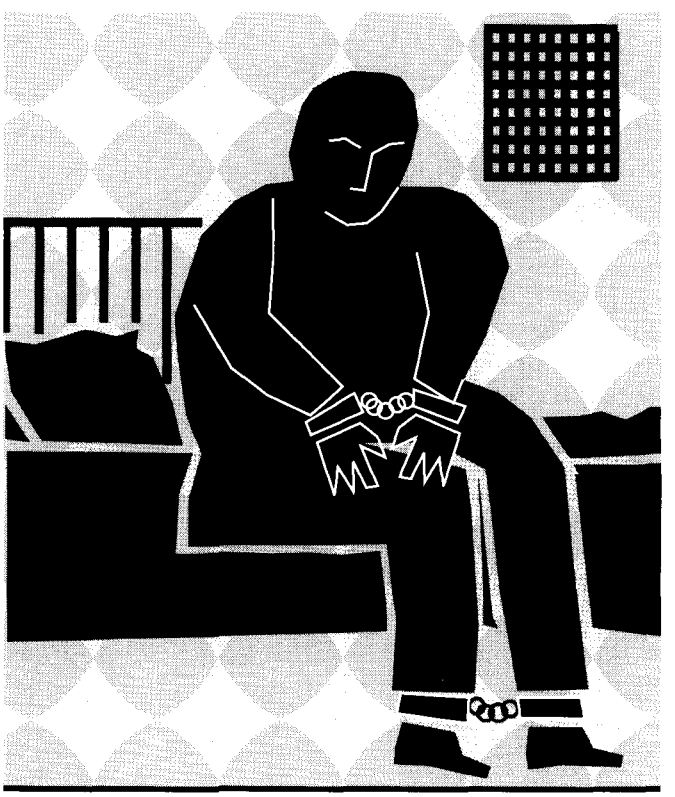
I spent two-and-a-half years in a maximum-security unit and another year and a half in a medium-security unit before earning my way to a minimum-security unit. When I arrived I had no indication of the cancer developing in my prostate. Prostate cancer rarely shows early symptoms. If I had known, I might have objected to being moved into an old army tent erected in an area originally intended for water run-off.

Shortly after my arrival, a routine blood test and then a biopsy showed up positive for cancer. I quickly learned that a degree in engineering and thirty years of programming computers had not produced an understanding of male anatomy. I was much more familiar with how the internal parts of my computers worked than with the functions of my own body.

Had I declined, or tried to delay the surgery, I would most probably not have had the option later. That's a fact of prison life. So after five years in prison and at the age of fifty-three, I had my prostate removed. When I came back from the hospital I was moved into a dormitory. I thought myself lucky and my problems at an end. Then I came down with the flu, which moved from my head to my chest and then into my abdomen. I developed a whole new set of problems, which I first suspected to be the lingering complications of a staph infection I had acquired in the hospital. What I subsequently went through should not happen to anyone, whether in or out of prison.

My treatment began when the prison doctor, aware that I had been suffering for several weeks, gave me two rounds of antibiotics as well as medication to control the spasms in my bladder. He promised to recommend that I be taken back to see the specialist who performed the surgery. But he could only recommend. Someone at the prison's administrative center must decide when, or even if, an appointment will be made.

Unlike the maximum-security units where the toilet is in the cell you share with another inmate, or the open stalls in



Raymond E. Williams *says this about himself: "My first computer had vacuum tubes. I was once a respected member of the computer world, looked up to by my customers and associates. Today I am serving seven-and-a-half to fifteen years for attempted child molesting. I do not excuse my actions. What I did was wrong. I hope that my writing will present a view of my life in prison on several levels."*

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some medium-security units where the guards can watch, the stalls in a minimum-security dormitory have ceiling-high partitions. The stalls were the one place you could have any privacy, and I often retreated there to be alone with my medical problems. Unfortunately, the floor of the stalls was usually awash in liquid, making me wonder if some men were afraid to touch their own penises, even to aim. Frequently, the toilets were also full and toilet paper was unavailable. At moments and in surroundings like these, as I squeezed my muscles in a useless effort to urinate normally, I realized once again that I had no more control over my situation than I had over my bladder.

At moments and in surroundings like these... I realized once again that I had no more control over my situation than I had over my bladder.

After three weeks, I was moved from the dorm into a room where my bladder problems were not so public. My visits to the bathroom, however, were no more successful. I was hurting enough that I asked for an emergency appointment with the unit doctor. This request was denied twice before I was finally allowed to see him. All he could do was apologize for the delays. A guard then called my name. "Hurry up. You're wanted at the admin center." That was where the specialists came to see inmates referred to them by prison doctors.

After I had waited for two hours, the urologist finally called me into the examination room. He tried to insert a Folly catheter with no success. He then considered what to do next while the nurse waited patiently for instructions. I just lay there half naked—and fully worried. The doctor, still holding the catheter, then said to the nurse, "This man is wearing boxer shorts. Didn't I request that he be given briefs and panty liners?"

The nurse consulted my chart. "His unit doctor ordered them last month." She put the chart down. "But the person at Central Supply who fills their orders has quit."

The doctor shook his head in what I interpreted to be resolute understanding of the prison system. He said, "It's eleven o'clock, can you have him in my uptown office by noon?"

The nurse suppressed a laugh. "No, it will take longer than that to do the paper work. I can get him to the hospital emergency room tonight."

The doctor held up the catheter, which was beginning to look like a garden hose. "Get dressed and go back to your unit," he said. "I'll have you out of here and in my office sometime in the next twenty-four hours. You'll be okay. Drink lots of water and try to urinate as much as you can."

I wished it were that simple.

Back at the unit, I sat in my favorite stall wondering what was going to happen next. Eventually an officer came in looking for me. He said I was going to the hospital for emergency surgery. He sounded concerned. Did he know something I didn't?

I was strip-searched and locked into leg shackles and belly-chain handcuffs for the trip to the hospital. At four that afternoon, a nurse pushed an eight-drawer mechanic's tool chest into my room in the hospital's prison wing. The doctor came in and quickly began selecting phili-forms, followers, and catheters of various sizes with which he managed to drain my bladder. He then told me that I'd have to stay in the hospital that night. He would do a Trans-Urethral-Resection-of-the -Bladder-Neck the next day. The procedure is defined as noninvasive because it does not require cutting the skin. But I wasn't so sure that having what looked like a network TV camera and a plumber's Roto-Rooter shoved up my penis was really noninvasive.

Two days after the procedure I was back in prison. A lot had happened in just over seventy-two hours. I was still feeling a little discomfort, but my urination problems were gone—at least for the moment. The doctor told me that I would have to go back to his office every few weeks for "aggressive dilation."

I had spent an extra night in the hospital learning how to clean myself, and the area around me, so that I could perform a self-catherization. I left the hospital confident that I could do this without any problems. But when I got back to the minimum unit, I found that it had been raining and there were now standing pools of water around the tents. The water stank. I was told that the sewer line under the housing unit on the hill above the tents had broken and the rain had washed the effluent down to our area.

There was no privacy in the tents, so I went into the bathroom trailer. The sergeant suggested that I use one of the stalls. But even if I could have cleaned off the toilet tank-top sufficiently, the walls were only waist high. The lieutenant's suggestion that I use the shower wasn't practical either. There was nowhere to lay out the lubricating jelly, or cleaning supplies, except maybe on the floor. The bathroom trailer was

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used by two hundred men, and no matter how well I cleaned an area there was still the probability that I would pick up some kind of an infection on the catheter and pass it into my bladder. I decided to wait until I could get moved back into a room. Maybe the scar tissue in my urethra would not constrict too much in the next few days.

Two weeks after I got back from the hospital, I was again stripped and thoroughly searched before being put into leg shackles and belly-chain handcuffs to be brought to the urologist. I was about to find out the meaning of "aggressive dilation."

We went in the back door to avoid the other patients. The doctor did not keep us waiting. He entered and addressed the officer accompanying me. "You've never been in here before. You can wait out in the hall if you don't want to watch."

"I'll stay," he replied, hooking his thumbs into his gun belt.

The doctor nodded. "Okay, have him drop his pants and shorts and lie back on the examination table."

I managed the maneuver without help or release from my chains. The doctor raised a platform under my legs. A female nurse handed him a syringe. As he squeezed its contents into my penis he said, "This may burn a little." It felt cold.

The nurse laid out a series of silvery stainless-steel instruments that looked like giant barbless fishhooks. The guard was curious. "What are those for? I thought you were just going to catheter him?" He then looked at the door as if he were reconsidering waiting in the hall.

The doctor selected an instrument and held it up to allow the sterilizing solution to drain off. "We use these to stretch the constricting scar tissue. I've filled his urinary tract with K-Y that has been infused with Zylocane. I'll be quick and he will feel only a little pressure."

I felt his hands on me; they were cold. The instrument was slender and the curve at the end gentle. I began to think he might be right. The second instrument was slightly larger and the feeling of pressure greater. The fourth dilator was the biggest. As the pressure increased, I tried to stretch the leg-shackles while pressing the belly-chain handcuffs into the examination table. My only distraction was watching the transportation officer, whose pallor alternated between a bright pink and a dull shade of olive green. The pressure was eventually released and I was able to relax, unhurt.

The doctor then handed a box of tissues to my guard. "He can get dressed now. There may be some leakage. Give him some of these to stuff into his shorts." He left the room to prepare the paperwork that would go back to the prison unit with me.

On my way out the doctor stopped me. "We'll do this again in a few weeks. Keep on cathetering yourself every evening. If you see any change in your urine stream, have the unit doctor call me. If we wait too long we might have to go back and make more cuts in the scar tissue. So make sure they call me. Good luck."

The doctor obviously did not understand how the system works. An inmate just does not have that kind of control.

Two more trips to the urologist's office for aggressive dilations were followed by delay after delay. I finally made an emergency medical request. Prison policy required a response within twenty-four hours. After eight days the nurse called me back in to ask, "Has your problem resolved itself?"

I answered, "No."

The next day I was taken to the urologist. He was upset about the unnecessary delays and talked about another visit to the hospital. He then told me that the scar tissue was only one millimeter from the bladder sphincter and one mistake, one slip, and the damage would be irreparable. He decided to wait before taking the risk of cutting the scar tissue again. I was relieved.

I have subsequently been moved to a prison unit for sex offenders in another part of the state. But my medical problems are not at an end. Like many others who must deal with an unresponsive health-care system, I cannot be sure I will continue to receive the treatment I need.

There are some who believe that prisoners like myself get better medical care than we deserve. I can only hope that none of them ever has to deal with a system which dehumanizes both the patient and the doctor in favor of the bottom line. □

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THE BISHOPS' RIGHT-HAND WOMAN

An interview with Dolores Leckey

Margaret O'Brien Steinfels

Dolores Leckey worked at the National Conference of Catholic Bishops for twenty years. At her retirement in December 1997, she headed the secretariat that staffed committees on the laity, on marriage and family, on women, and subcommittees on youth and on lay ministry. The membership of these five committees totaled thirty-five bishops.

A printed interview cannot capture Leckey's ability to listen, or her merry laugh, which she deploys often, but her responses suggest the eminent good sense, level-headedness, and straightforward speech that must have been great assets in her work at the bishops' conference.

■ MARGARET O'BRIEN STEINFELS: You have had a unique position from which to view the two most important groups in the Catholic church in the next century: the bishops and the laity. Presumably we will have no shortage of bishops as we do of clergy and religious, nor will there be a shortage of lay people. In light of the future we can imagine, the leadership quality of the bishops will be ever more important. Assess their strengths as you now see them.

■ DOLORES LECKEY: For one thing, I would have to say that their leadership qualities have shifted. I don't see the kind of thing we saw in the early- to mid-eighties where bishops were really standing up for issues affecting the destiny of the world. That doesn't seem to be there now. Their focus is now internal.

In terms of recent developments around internal issues, I see this: that while there is still this seed of hope that maybe there will be more vocations to the priesthood, the bishops are looking with a little more confidence to lay leadership. That's a strength. How did this happen? I think this comes because they have more experience in their dioceses. They seem to be more confident that lay leaders are going to be able to help pass on the tradition of the church. The bishops have this enormous job and they're happy to have people collaborating with them.

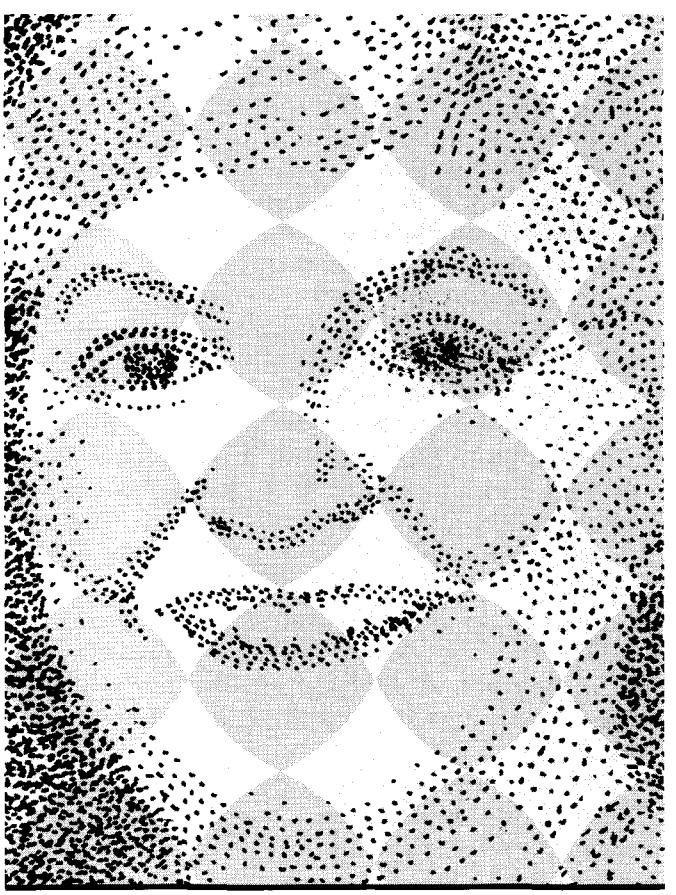
■ STEINFELS: Where do you think the bishops are weak, or underprepared for the challenges they face?

■ LECKEY: This is a mirror image of their strengths. They are trusting of lay people, but not enough of one another, or so it appears. There isn't the kind of trust about differences that we saw in the eighties when the pastorals on peace and on the economy were being debated. Here were bishops who had serious differences and yet the bond of brotherhood or Christian solidarity was stronger than all of that. Now, with liturgical and ministerial questions, they are into camps a little bit too much. As a result, you have minimal participation on the part of some in the bishops' conference.

■ STEINFELS: Is this part of the polarization question? Or do you think that people are more focused on their dioceses and less focused on the national scene?

■ LECKEY: They are more focused on their dioceses, although many generously come forward and accept some national positions. With the restructuring of the NCCB, we may see a bit more participation. The last I saw of the restructuring proposal, bishops couldn't serve on more than one committee, and so many more will have to fill in.

■ STEINFELS: Turn to the laity. What do you think are the strengths of the laity overall? How well prepared are they for dual responsibilities within the church and as the church in the world?



Margaret O'Brien Steinfels *is the editor of* Commonweal.

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■ **LECKEY:** When we did a consultation in preparation for the 1987 Synod on the Laity (250,000 people participated in one way or another), we noticed that the lay vocation to participate in politics, to shape the social order, was not part of how the laity saw themselves. Except for prolife people, they didn't really see running for public office or being a public servant as part of the lay vocation.

Young adults don't have a formation within the web of Catholic culture anymore...The Catholic intellectual life is not touching the lives of people who are very expert in other areas.

■ **STEINFELS:** Would you say that when the laity see themselves consciously as Catholics, it is through work in the church?

■ **LECKEY:** I have never held the view that participation in "lay ministry" somehow siphons off your energy to be a conscious Christian presence in the world. I have never seen the data that says that is true. In fact, we have evidence of the opposite. For example, we would receive a letter from a bank vice-president reporting that since he had become a lector and really paid attention to the Scriptures, he began to see people differently, began to see problems differently. This is the classic way: steep people in Scripture or in service, and in the sacraments. Unless your defenses are enormously high, liturgy is really forming people. Liturgical pioneer Virgil Michel was right!

One strength lay people have is that they are being formed through lay ministry. Another is being part of this massive spiritual quest that's going on. Go into a bookstore. Twenty-five years ago there was a little shelf of books on the occult. Now whole rooms are dedicated to spirituality, the spiritual classics. A lot of it is New Age, but a lot of it isn't. Another strength the laity bring is their experience in the ecumenical world. Lay people are very prepared, should the hopes of the encyclical on the millennium come true, that Christian unity would be achieved. They marry non-Catholics, they work with non-Catholics, and their children marry non-Catholics. We have done things side-by-side all along.

■ **STEINFELS:** Lay people have moved into many jobs and roles once reserved for clergy and women religious. They don't usually have the long formation of religious and clergy. What do you see as the strengths they bring to these tasks? the weaknesses?

■ **LECKEY:** Particularly young adults don't have a formation within the web of Catholic culture anymore, or conscience formation about Catholic social thought. I can still remember my first job in a New York City playground. Walking to work, as a college student, I was thinking, "I must put in a good day's work because of.... everything I've been learning in my ethics class." That was part of the air you breathed. A lot of that is lost. At college today, what is required theologically of students? A lot was required a generation ago. The Catholic intellectual life is not touching the lives of people who are very expert in other areas.

There is in the Catholic laity today, on the one side, a sense of freedom and autonomy, and on the other side, a sense of—well, the church can't say very much to us. There is a two-edged sword. There's autonomy. And there's a lot of neediness. Catholic lay people are looking for support in their family lives; they want some kind of spiritual help. They want things that will help create a meaningful life, a stable life for them in a sea of change. What kind of educational mission can address this, I don't know. Catholic laity are very well educated in most areas and they also have money. But to really believe that the church is a viable instrument for creating a just and more wholesome society—I am not sure people really believe that except super-orthodox people.

■ **STEINFELS:** In light of this, what did you make of the Vatican document on lay ministry ("Instruction on Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priests," *Origins*, November 27, 1997)? At some point in reading it, I said this is not about lay people, this is about clergy.

■ **LECKEY:** That's exactly right. It's about clergy and I think the underlying assumption is that after all it is the clergy who have to set the tone. If you are going to let your authority be run over rough shod, you are going to have serious problems. But we don't have a problem with that in the United States. We are very respectful of the roles of the clergy and roles of the laity.

The document arrived last November just as we were about to have a workshop on lay ministry for seventy bishops. Bishop James Hoffman went to Rome to receive it. He is now chairing the ad hoc committee dealing with this. The message he brought back was: Look, if you've had a problem it's going to help you. If you don't have a problem, don't get worried about it.

The Instruction had its roots in the 1987 Synod over the whole question of women and women in ministry—I think it was the flurry over altar girls; now we have altar girls in most places. So ten years have passed while they were trying to work on it.

■ **STEINFELS:** Do you think there is polarization today within the church?

■ **LECKEY:** I think there is a polarization. I think it is more methodological than substantive. It has to do with a certain pedagogy. There are people in the church who think that the bishops have relinquished their proper authority by listening to the laity, and listening to other people. And that, in fact, there would be no problems if the bishops would talk long and loud. Another teaching method is to engage

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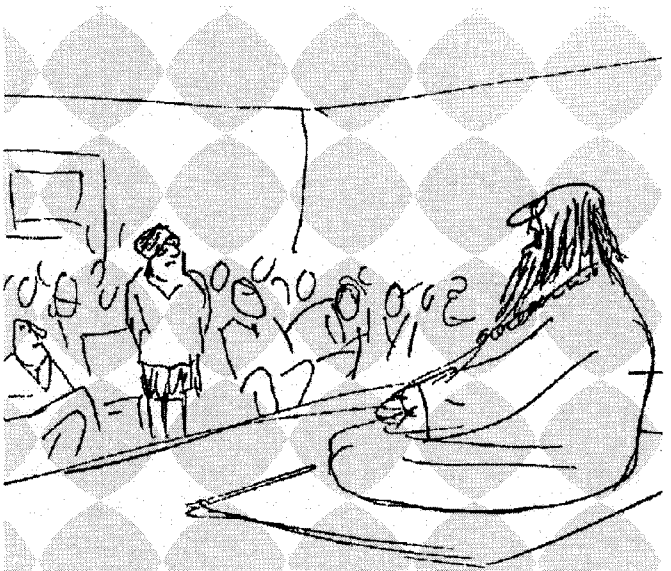

"Must *I interpret every wise thing I say?"*

in a dialogical exchange. Some people do not accept this as a legitimate method and do not want to participate in a dialogue. What's to be said? If the bishops would just do their job, and tell everybody what's right and true, then the church won't have any problems.

There are others, I include myself, who say that we learn best by being engaged with one another. And I go back to one of the greatest documents in the church, *Ecclesiam suam*, in which Paul VI laid out a way of being in the church. You engage in a dialogue. It's a path to holiness. We have to listen to God within us. We have to listen to the expression of God in others. We have to listen to the magisterium. We have to listen to the tradition. But if you feel there is nothing to be listened to, in another person, that goes back to trust. Religious experience depends on a certain kind of trust.

■ **STEINFELS:** As Cardinal Joseph Bernardin cast the issue in the Common Ground Initiative, polarization occurs on all fronts, among conservatives, among liberals. From all of the work you've done, what would you say are the main failures of liberals and conservatives?

■ **LECKEY:** Liberals think dialogue will solve everything. That's one. If you just talk enough, that somehow.... Liberals are dealing in stereotypes as much as conservatives are dealing in them. This is one of the things I really learned at the NCCB, that lay people hold a stereotype of the bishop. It was of this great corporate bishop who sat around trying to dream up mean things to do to people. When they would finally meet flesh-and-blood bishops, they'd be blown out of the water. To see that this was a person striving to be a good, holy Christian, listening to the people, trying to do the very best he could. They had this totally bizarre image.

I think we've done that to each other. From the liberal point of view there's been a problem in not recognizing the strengths that are there, the things that are worth preserving in the tradition. There's a kind of automatic discarding. Or that the ordination of women will solve every problem. Or that married clergy will solve every problem. You know what gets people? It's not ordination of women; it's not whether or not we have a married clergy. It's down to a very basic human relations problem. It's how they're treated in their local church.

■ **STEINFELS:** So, you don't think the women's ordination question is a big fracturing issue in the church, as *Humanae vitae* was?

■ **LECKEY:** I do not. I do not.... Not in the lives of ordinary women, day in and day out. Nor is it in the lives of feminist theologians. The ones I know are hanging in.

■ **STEINFELS:** About conservatives? What do you think are their weaknesses or failings?

■ **LECKEY:** I think it has to do with equating style and expression with substance. It's not the Creed and it's not the fathers of the church and the mothers of the church. It's this: Should we even talk about a certain topic? What I discovered in trying to bring some very, very conservative people into the discussion, is that they don't want to talk to anybody else. It's pointless as far as they are concerned.

■ **STEINFELS:** Lots of people talk about generational differences, people who grew up before the council and people who grew up after. That gets intercut with yuppies and Generation X. What do you think?

■ **LECKEY:** Just in informal conversations with young people that I've run into through the network that everybody's children seem to have: first of all, they are fascinated that there are churches where you can go and there is a beautifully put-together liturgy. I find young people fascinated by Trappists! By some of our old customs. Statues! Sacred space. These are the same people who are reading all of these spirituality books. We have a lot of this in our tradition, and we were so busy changing things....

■ **STEINFELS:** What consequences do you foresee for the foreclosure or the closure on women's ordination? I ask that because people say: Oh women, they hate the church. I meet young men who know young women who won't go to church. But I don't see a lot of that. What do you think?

■ **LECKEY:** I don't see that either. The young people I know would not object to the ordination of women; they would probably even like it. But it's not going to drive them from the church. On the other hand, I don't think that young people are worrying about doctrine one way or the other. They're worrying about their community life.

■ **STEINFELS:** Do you have any answers for questions I haven't asked?

■ **LECKEY:** This is not a question, or an answer, but a hope. I would really like to see the NCCB undertake something to do with the global economy. That's a hard one to get at—your pocketbook. The other thing that I would like to see is something about lay people in the public service of society. I'd love to see the bishops do something on that and come together around that, and hold up *public* service as a true vocation. □

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No short cuts allowed

The Wealth and Poverty of Nations
Why Some Are So Rich and Some So Poor
David S. Landes
W.W. Norton $30, 650 pp.

Margaret O'Brien Steinfels

Economic history merges the two dreariest of sciences, but you'd never know it from David Landes's new book. It is engaging, energetic, well written, and, despite its length (524 pages of text, 126 pages of notes, bibliography, and index) and weight (2.5 pounds), hard to put down. His brilliant treatment of a complex subject—why some nations are so rich and some so poor—provides multiple answers, some of them obvious, some debatable, some convincing, some provocative. Anyone seriously engaged in "reforming" economic, political, and social structures ought to absorb its sophisticated hard-nosed empirical view of why, in the author's view, even the poorest Americans are generally better off than almost all the inhabitants, rich or poor, of China and the nations of Africa.

Landes is hardly complacent about that imbalance, but neither does he offer reassurances that there are any easy ways to redress it. Being among the first industrializing nations does not assure continuing prosperity; those who come later can leapfrog. But finally, he argues that "the most successful cures for poverty come from within....What counts is work, thrift, honesty, patience, tenacity. To people haunted by misery and hunger, that may add up to selfish indifference. But at bottom, no empowerment is so effective as self-empowerment." Sounds familiar perhaps (shades of Benjamin Franklin and Ronald Reagan), but—and this is crucial—the evidence, argument, and interpretation are not.

The Wealth and Poverty of Nations reaches as far back as the fall of the Roman Empire to show how that truism became true, first in England, then in North America and the rest of Europe, at least as far as economic progress can be measured by per capita GNP. But this is not a work of statistical comparisons or Western chauvinism; economic interpretation and historical events are intertwined and his thesis finely argued with an eye to telling detail and example.

Consider eyeglasses: those who are lifelong wearers regard them as mere ocular appendages. But when they were first invented (probably in Pisa at the end of the thirteenth century), they increased the working lives of scribes, toolmakers, weavers, metalworkers. As the human eye ages the lens begins to harden and it can no longer focus. The invention of convex glass lenses and a device to hold them corrected that. Thus, "around the age of forty, a medieval craftsman could reasonably expect to live and work another twenty years, the best years of his working life...if he could see well enough. Eyeglasses solved the problem."

Of course, eyeglasses in themselves didn't bring about the industrial revolution or raise any nation's GNP. They were but one of a number of singular technological innovations (the water wheel, the mechanical clock, printing, and gunpowder) that in Europe by 1500 had spawned their own little revolutions. The mechanical clock required skill at working metals and shaping fine parts; its proliferation changed the way people thought about time and organized it. The water wheels freed human and animal labor for other productive uses; in manufacturing them, millwrights experimented with toothed gears and cranks devising new ways to direct water-driven power, for example, in grinding grain and making paper. These machine-making skills would subsequently be put to other manufacturing uses. It was, then, no single invention or innovation but the accumulation of them that early on set Europe, and especially England, apart from the rest of the world and on the road to exponential economic growth.

Here, Landes stops to examine one of the first, but not necessarily determinative, gaps between Europe and China, which, after all, was the first home of gunpowder, printing, paper, wheelbarrows, etc. What happened? Why didn't the Chinese ultimately prosper? The assumption that "knowledge and know-how are cumulative" didn't hold in China: smelting, once invented, fell into disuse, spinning machines for hemp were never adapted to cotton, paper remained a handmade luxury. Rather than adapting and refining their own inventions, the Chinese suffered from what Landes calls "technological oblivion and regression." Political and cultural values were simply not attuned to innovation or enterprise: the absence of free markets and of institutionalized property rights played a part, and through most of its history, China's top-down government worked mightily to prevent change.

In contrast, Europe had a *joie de trouver*. Why? Landes cites several long-accepted explanations: the Judeo-Christian respect for manual labor, subordination of nature to man, and sense of linear time, but he himself stresses the role of the mar-

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ket. "Enterprise was free in Europe. Innovation worked and paid, and rulers and vested interests were limited in their ability to prevent or discourage innovation. Success bred imitation and emulation." And he helpfully reminds us that the original "restraint of trade" consisted in exorbitant, and sometimes extortionary, road and canal tolls that inhibited the development of "free trade." By the fifteenth century, the British had done away with such local tolls, so that early on they created a national market in which to buy and sell among themselves; not so in France, Germany, and points East, where barriers remained well into the nineteenth century. Within Europe, some nations did better than others. Italy led the medieval commercial revolution (and invented those eyeglasses), but it was a prisoner of the Mediterranean and guild structures that kept the great merchant city-states from joining in the Great Opening, as Landes terms overseas expansion to China, India, and the New World.

He puts less stock than many in the economic advantages brought by exploration and discovery. His contempt is palpable for the human and economic waste of the slave trade, the extermination of the Amerindians, the expulsion of the Jews, and the exploitation of African labor that the Spanish, Portuguese, English, Dutch, and later colonial powers practiced. But his criticism does not change his conclusion: colonialism was not a determining factor in the race to the industrial revolution. Rather the confluence in some countries of manufacturing, shipbuilding, navigational instrumentation, commercial acumen, political and social values, and simple curiosity that led men to sail unknown seas also laid the groundwork at home for the economic revolutions that followed. But not everywhere. Overseas empire waylaid some: the Spanish ultimately lost the riches they seized from "New Spain." Buying everything from the rest of Europe, they fell far behind in manufacturing and industrial development and left a parallel economic legacy in Spanish America, with consequences we continue to see today. "Wealth is not so good as work, nor riches so great as earnings."

In contrast, the English colonies in North America were less remunerative and less appealing—at least in the short run. "They caught fish, tapped and refined whale oil, grew and bought and resold cereals, wove cloth, cast and forged iron, cut timber and mined coal." They "built on work," rather than easy money, again with consequences we continue to see today.

Shades of Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*! Many historians now find that thesis "implausible and unacceptable." Not Landes, who, in a brilliant and brief digression, isolates those qualities of this-worldly rationality that Weber described, and offers data to show how often those rational, ordered, diligent, and productive people were, in fact, of the Protestant persuasion. Not always, of course. But Weber's thesis, as Landes sees it, "is that in that place and time..., religion encouraged the appearance in numbers of a personality type that had been exceptional and adventitious before; and that this type created a new economy...that we know as (industrial) capitalism."

The Japanese displayed similar qualities. Though late to the industrial revolution, they ultimately surpassed the trailblazers with a work ethic that Landes argues most Europeans would have rejected. The Japanese, for example, have no Sabbath, hence they can work seven days a week. Their "industrious revolution" paved the way for the industrial revolution. And that is Landes's bottom line: the Japanese, like their industrializing predecessors were committed to "work rather than wealth." What a model to have to follow. But that is the point, isn't it? There is no easy way to move from poverty to wealth—at least as Landes defines it.

Not everyone will share his assumptions that material wealth is the sine qua non of human happiness and well-being. Other things count: family loyalty, community solidarity, spiritual and religious practices. I doubt that Landes would dismiss these, or insist that GNP is the first measure of human flourishing. And who would deny that without a decent level of material goods, financial predictability, the rule of law, and a functioning economy, there could not be human flourishing at all? Why else are our consciences so deeply troubled when we see the desolation wreaked by economic and social poverty, except that we have so much and others so little?

Landes's book is a challenge to the mindset of many on the left, especially religious activists. Although they have long recognized the fatal weaknesses of centralized command economies and have come to a grudging respect for markets, they continue to view poverty-racked societies as victims largely of outside forces rather than their own values. Government action, not private investment and the working of markets, continues to be the focus of these activists' recommendations. In fact, Landes makes some points congenial to this perspective: racial and sexual equality, universal education, and democratic institutions are necessary for economic development; concentrated wealth, whether in private hands or national treasuries, hinders economic development. As a historian, he also leaves most current policy questions unaddressed. But it would be unfortunate if anyone set aside this history in order to protect an ideology.

"The task of the rich countries is to help the poor become healthier and wealthier," Landes writes. "If we do not, they will seek to take what they cannot make; and if they cannot earn by exporting commodities, they will export people. In short, wealth is an irresistible magnet; and poverty is a potentially raging contaminant: it cannot be segregated, and our peace and prosperity depend in the long run on the well being of others." Too utilitarian? Perhaps. But I cannot help concluding that the story of how we have come to be so prosperous, too prosperous, has lessons that we should heed as we extend a helping hand to others. What we say and do can hinder as much as help. *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations* shows how very subtle the balance can be.

Margaret O'Brien Steinfels *is the editor of* Commonweal.

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TIJUANA COLLISION

Twilight on the Line
Underworlds and Politics at the U.S.-Mexico Border
Sebastian Rotella
W.W. Norton, $25, 320 pp.

Joseph A. Page

The U.S.-Mexican border, in the words of journalist Sebastian Rotella, is a "magical place" that transforms "migrants into martyrs, intellectuals into cops, cops into social workers, teenage homeboys into jet-set hitmen, gangsters into tycoons, [and] politicians into gangsters."

At the same time, as this account of the border phenomenon demonstrates with power and insight, the line separating the United States from Latin America also serves as a focal point for violence, corruption, and other evils that have hindered the process of democratization in Mexico, and have cast an ominous shadow northward.

Twilight on the Line does not really tell the story of the entire border between the United States and Mexico. It is rather the story of the border near Tijuana, and a vivid portrait of that once sleepy town best known in North America for the appropriation of its name by Herb Alpert's brass ensemble. Today, Tijuana is the second most populous metropolis on the west coast of the Western Hemisphere, a world capital of narcotics trafficking, a transit station for large-scale illegal immigration into the United States, and a window into what Rotella terms the "dark side of the economic integration envisioned by NAFTA."

Tijuana made front-page news in 1994 when an assassin's bullet cut down Mexican presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio as he was campaigning in one of the city's slums. Colosio had received the nomination of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which had ruled Mexico for decades and was at last yielding to pressures that were opening up the political process to genuine competition. The PRI nominee was favored to win despite the relaxation of his party's iron grip, and his assassination profoundly shocked Mexico. A lone gunman was captured, but efforts to discover whether other forces were behind the murder have satisfied few Mexicans.

Rotella puts the killing in the context of the emergence of Tijuana as the headquarters of a multibillion-dollar commerce in narcotics, and describes in detail the corrupting influence of the city's drug lords upon local politics, local law enforcement, and ultimately the national political scene.

Tijuana drug dealers were involved in the shooting of Cardinal Juan Jesús Posadas Ocampo of Guadalajara one year before Colosio's murder, an incident that likewise has yet to be explained adequately. A startling aspect of the prelate's death was the participation of members of a San Diego youth gang, who had been hired by a Tijuana narcosyndicate in a grim parody of the free trade promoted by NAFTA, and were sent to Guadalajara ostensibly to assassinate a rival dealer at the city's airport. Some believe that it was not a case of the cardinal being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The lawlessness endemic to Tijuana complements the massive flow of illegal immigrants across the nearby border. Rotella describes the difficulties that plague efforts to control the human waves crossing into California, as the U.S. Border Patrol captures a fraction of the entrants and returns them to Tijuana, where they regroup and try again. Indeed, the efforts of law-enforcement officials on both sides of the line have often focused more on protecting the immigrants from the physical threats they face from human vultures who would prey on them, from the natural environment, and from high-speed traffic on the I-5 freeway.

The linkage between immigration and the drug trade comes across vividly in Rotella's account, which also points out how cracking down on the illegal crossings can serve to increase the costs of

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entering the United States and thereby increase the economic incentives for organized crime to become involved.

Perhaps the most touching aspect of *Twilight on the Line* emerges from Rotella's portraits of Mexican reformers who have labored heroically to overcome the challenges posed by the border. For example, Federico Benítez, who became Tijuana's police chief in 1992, was a lonely crusader who struggled to modernize his force, foster respect for human rights, and combat criminal elements among his own officers as well as within federal and state law-enforcement agencies working in the city. The latter had been seriously corrupted by the narco-traffickers, to the extent that on one occasion a vicious firefight broke out between federal and state agents working for competing gangs.

Jorge Alberto Duarte, the idealistic warden of the state penitentiary in Tijuana, permitted the wives and children of inmates from southern and central Mexico to reside within, granted conjugal visits liberally, fostered dialogue with the prisoners, and even tolerated the existence of a unique intramural society with its own laws and economy. By doing so, he managed to avoid the kind of killing and rioting that has occurred in penitentiaries in Brazil and elsewhere.

Both Benítez and Duarte paid the ultimate price for their earnest efforts. Federal police ambushed and assassinated Benítez on a cross-town expressway, while Duarte fell victim to kidnappers who snatched him in front of his home and shot him as he struggled to escape from their vehicle.

According to Rotella, the border at Tijuana is "the future in the making," where California meets Tijuana and the best and the worst of both societies collide. Although he gives somewhat short shrift to how Southern California (and especially Anglo-dominated San Diego) is reacting to the collision, his portrayal of the Mexican side of the line is deftly drawn, thoroughly disturbing, and constructively provocative. □

Joseph A. Page, *a professor at the Georgetown University Law Center, is the author of* The Brazilians *and* Perón: A Biography.

NATURE AS SPRINGBOARD

Wild Thoughts from Wild Places
David Quammen
Scribner, $25, 352 pp.

Clare Collins

In the introduction to this collection of essays, David Quammen offers an apologia for, as he calls it, the "slick" newsstand magazines. He then berates the "safely tenured academics and high-minded literati" for not seeing past the "advertisements for fancy sunglasses and Rollerblades and miracle-fiber underwear" and the "stories that might politely be called fatuous junk," to the meaty, imaginative nonfiction work slick magazines also publish.

Quammen is editor-at-large for *Outside*, a glossy monthly whose emphasis on exotic (and expensive) destinations and pricey gear makes it the *Vanity Fair* of outdoor magazines. He wrote a column titled "Natural Acts" for *Outside* for fifteen years, and most of the essays in this collection first appeared in the column or as features in *Outside, Rolling Stone*, or *Powder*.

Considering that this essay collection is one in a string of recent books to grow out of articles first published in *Outside*—the others include Sebastian Junger's *The Perfect Storm* and Jon Krakauer's *Into Thin Air*—the magazine's literary stature hardly seems in peril. Quammen himself has a rare ability to write with broad appeal on topics ranging from white-water kayaking to trout fishing to Telemark skiing. In lesser hands, I suspect that most of these adventures would prove interesting only to hard-core devotees—or madmen. But Quammen, author of the prize-winning *The Story of the Dodo*, uses his exotic subjects as a framework for explaining everything from biodiversity to the physics of fluid dynamics to evolution.

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The book's title doesn't refer solely to the unmarred, out-there wilderness. Quammen's "Wild" is an existential destination as well: places "unpolluted by absolute safety and certainty." Wildness is found not only on a secluded stretch of the Salmon River or Chile's Futaleufu River, but also in the foothills of Burbank, where coyotes roam, and in the urban "canyons" of New York City, which have fostered amazing evolutionary adaptations in the "postmodern pigeon."

The book is organized around four themes, "The River," "The City," "The Mountains," and, finally, "The Heart," that inner landscape that can be just as challenging to conquer as the most hairy stretch of river rapids. For that reason, I began reading section by section, essay by essay. But I don't recommend that approach. *Wild Thoughts* is too exhausting. Quammen's writing is energetic in the extreme, stuffed with information, but also with brash, provoking, indeed wild thoughts. Consider this passage from "Grabbing the Loop," in which the essayist laments plans to dam the Futaleufu River, a white-water Mecca, into a series of placid reservoirs: "Humanity badly needs things that are big and fearsome and homicidally wild. Counterintuitive as it may seem, we need to preserve those few remaining beasts, places, and forces of nature capable of murdering us with sublime indifference."

Quammen can write overlong and he does (as you can see) pontificate. In a sense, he just can't contain himself. He rarely resists the urge to throw in one more aside or digression. "The White Tigers of Cincinnati," for instance, warns

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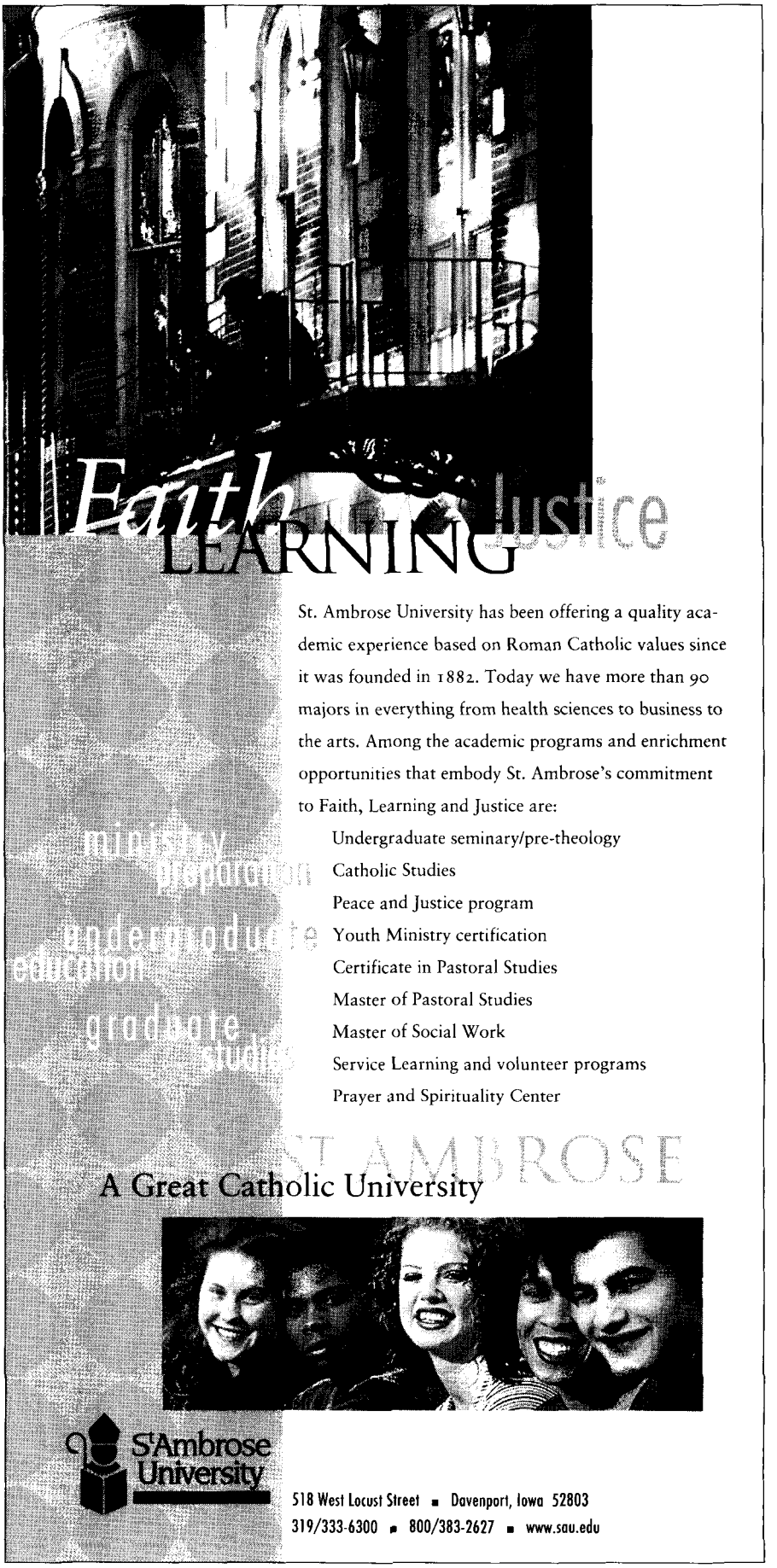
about the dangers of breeding endangered species—in this case white tigers, veritable genetic mutants—for zoo exhibits. "Is the white tiger propagation a legitimate enterprise in zoo keeping? Or is it show business? Or is it both?" he asks. "The issue is complicated because those questions lead to others, some of which are easy to answer and some hard." What follows is an extended debate on the nature and value of zoos. But first, let's talk about tigers, particularly white tigers, genetic engineering...and on and on.

Wild Thoughts is most delightful when focused on quirky, slightly nutty personalities. Chris Spelius, subject of "Time and Tide on the Ocoee River," is the founder of the white-water rodeo, a type of kayaking competition for the very skilled—or the very foolish. Contestants perform stunts such as nosedives and rolls in what are called white-water "holes." As Quammen explains, a white-water hole is "a recirculating maw of foam...a vortex laid horizontal." Why does Spelius *do* this? He tells us simply, "Water is my medium."

Spelius has designed the perfect rodeo kayak and hopes to get it produced by a major manufacturer in time to use it in the World Whitewater Rodeo Championships, just three months away. However, this essay, ostensibly about building the perfect rodeo kayak, is really about aging and moving on in one's life. For Spelius, the big, hunky hot-dogging legend of the kayaking circuit, is about to turn forty-one! Younger, more agile kayakers are passing him by.

Many of Quammen's essays focus on the fleeting nature of things. In "Only Connect" he discusses the Wildlands Project, an effort to create so-called conservation corridors, reconnecting pockets of wilderness throughout the U.S. These wildlife corridors allowing flora and fauna to thrive as nature intended them to are the only hope we have for slowing "ecosystem decay," according to some. Only Connect. That is what Quammen, ultimately, is writing about. □

Clare Collins *is a freelance writer and tutor who lives in Pawcatuck, Connecticut.*



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LIKE ONE OF US?

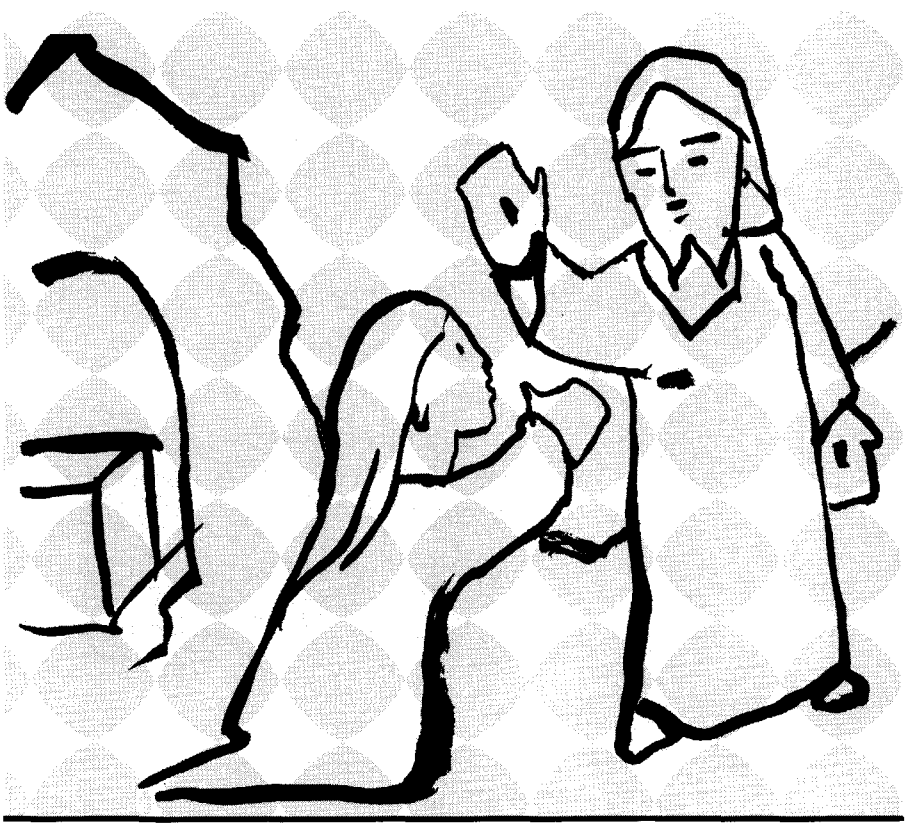
The Gospel of the Beloved Disciple
James P. Carse
HarperSanFrancisco, $18, 144 pp.

Ed Block, Jr.

As if imitating the length of the texts from which it borrows part of its title, *The Gospel of the Beloved Disciple* is a short book. Its conception is simple, and clever. Followers of Jesus of Nazareth approach an old woman who was also a follower. Showing her their account of Jesus' life, they prompt her to recall the events herself. *The Gospel of the Beloved Disciple*, recorded in ninety-five "chapters" of varying length, is this account. "The beloved disciple" is a Samaritan woman, perhaps the unforgettable Samaritan woman of John's Gospel. Whoever she is, her *Gospel* makes for a fascinating—and troubling—read.

This gospel begins with its own infancy narrative. The technique is a standard postmodern one: radical defamiliarization. Miryam is an odd child who hears voices. Yosef is very young. Miryam and her baby escape the slaughter of the innocents because a soldier pantomimes hacking them to death. Like his mother, Jesus is an odd and dreamy boy, who sometimes wanders off by himself. He and his cousin Yohanon play together. Jesus is apprenticed to his father Yosef, who builds "great houses for merchants, Roman officials, and priests," but after he sees Yosef beat an old slave, Jesus leaves home with back wages but no inheritance.

Jesus wanders into the hill country where he meditates, listens to the parables of rabbis, and is taken for a madman. He meets Yohanon at a river, and when Jesus falls in, Yohanon pries the hand loose from the rock to which Jesus clings. Jesus also has "mystical" experiences. First he doesn't see a chameleon but sees and is seen by a raven with a dot of light in its eye. He also hears voices. "Thoughts were little more than scrambled sound. . . . So the secret names [of God] returned, cried out by a voice to whom no speaker belonged."



Later Jesus meets with an insurrectionist band. This is the first of several such encounters, which remind the reader that the first century was a time of political upheaval. However, Jesus' conversation with the insurrectionists sounds more like pop anthropolitical cleverness than the words of an itinerant Jewish mystic. Overall, this "inside" look at the "forty days in the desert" reduces rather than opens Jesus' experience. The four evangelists learned—or hit upon by lucky accident—a common narrative trick. External narrative is often more mysterious than stream of consciousness.

Coming out of the desert, Jesus encounters the Samaritan woman. But it is she who tells him that he has a thirst he'll never satisfy. This is another of the numerous reversals of familiar Gospel details. Another comes when Jesus meets a paralytic woman. Jesus says, "I do not have the power to straighten your legs," but, when she replies, "You have a greater power, rabbi," Jesus can only stand silent. The woman also has the last word: "When you didn't touch me, I saw that you too have a need for healing."

Again and again Jesus asserts that he cannot perform wonders. "Neither can anyone else," he says. "The wonders are always there before we come to them." An insight lies buried here, but Jesus' denials contradict what ancient Christian, Jewish, and pagan sources all agree upon: that Jesus did extraordinary things, not easily explained by human means.

Throughout *The Gospel of the Beloved Disciple* the reader finds strange echoes of the canonical Gospels. A blind man, claiming to see more than the sighted, reverses a typical evangelist's theme. There are also surprising stories of "talents" and new interpretations of the creation story. In an interesting Nietzschean twist, Jesus tells a rich man unable to give up his vanity to practice it boldly. A bit later Jesus says, "I trust only those who know they are empty of God."

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Jesus and his small band of followers proceed toward Jerusalem. On this journey, the narrative continues to raise questions about who Jesus thought he was. Praising Carse's *Breakfast at the Victory: The Mysticism of Ordinary Experience* in these pages (October 20, 1995), Lawrence Cunningham credits Carse with catching "the changeableness of human existence" and "the mystery of human love and the tenuous hold we have on time." *The Gospel of the Beloved Disciple* has little to do with mystery and almost everything to do with tenuousness.

The book reaches something of a climax in Jesus' encounter with the Roman prefect, Pilatus. Again, however, Jesus' silence in the face of accusations seems a blank silence. The book's inevitable denouement is Jesus' death, but it ends short of the Resurrection. The final chapter finds the Samaritan woman with Miryam at the foot of the cross. "'He is not dead,' Miryam said....'I hear him singing.' The Samaritan studied his face in the starlight. His open mouth, black with flies, sounded with the hum of their feast....Not until dawn did she notice the raven, motionless, holding her in its gaze, close enough that she could see the dot of light in its eye."

James Carse is professor emeritus of religious history at New York University. His *Gospel* may incline readers to see the canonical Gospels in a different light. Does this portrayal of Jesus and his followers as a ragged band of outcasts highlight Jesus' love for the poor? Do Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John give us a sanitized picture of Jesus' life and times? A more troubling question might be: How much do the four Gospels merely reflect the all-too-human desire to find in an unusual person, a more-than-human power and meaning?

The jacket blurb claims that this gospel rings with authenticity. But authentic in what sense? This portrayal of Jesus reminds me of the line from Joan Osborne's song, "What if God was one of us, just a slob like one of us?" Perhaps that is the picture of Jesus which our postmodern age desires. □

Ed Block, Jr., *teaches English at Marquette University in Milwaukee.*

What is the meaning of Life?

"And some he gave as apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers, to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry for the building up of the Body of Christ"
Eph. 4:11-12 NAB

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What would you like to be when you grow up?

I

Here I am in the garden
on my knees digging
as if I were innocent,
gloveless in island soil—
sandy, unstable,
hardly soil at all,
very sharp and mineral.

Planted to temper the heat,
this garden has trees & fruit trees.
After a stormy spring
it's a low-walled well of green
bouncing and blossoming.
Already it turns me
toward autumn crocus now in leaf,
chrysanthemum, feverfew,
white & gold after the pears drop.

It's at its best in winter,
free of me, I can then imagine it—
its six wonderful places to sit
(next to the tarragon and sage,
under the dogwood for breakfast,
on a log beside the speedwell).

It has taught me
planning which is essential
is impossible.

Mistakes (bittersweet, honeysuckle)
come back every year
hugely bountiful. So do
the peonies, lilies, & daylilies,
& grandma's rampant rose.

Dear garden of my making
stuffed with my ideas & sweat,
you are reasonable.
Your pleasure
is, like me, physical.

So, behave.
I can't keep on counting my fingers
to make sure all your parts are on hand.

I head for the kitchen, to cook.
I have no other plans.
You were not what I needed after all.

II

The reason for the garden is
this rooming house, this tidy
body's heart, my minded body

where I now rent only
the attic regularly,
and the kitchen, on odd nights.

It is the shabby residence
or sidereal repeat
of recurrent astonishment.
And it has known in every room
the othering bliss of child
my child, each child different
for each other's sake, each
blessing me blind,
tenant & ceaseless & tiresomely
teaching me
relentlessly
to reach joy by choosing
to love. I so choose, I think.

Only the rich can choose to be poor.
There must be something I can do.

I think I've got whatever I need
in the overhead compartment.

Marie Ponsot

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NO IDEOLOGUE

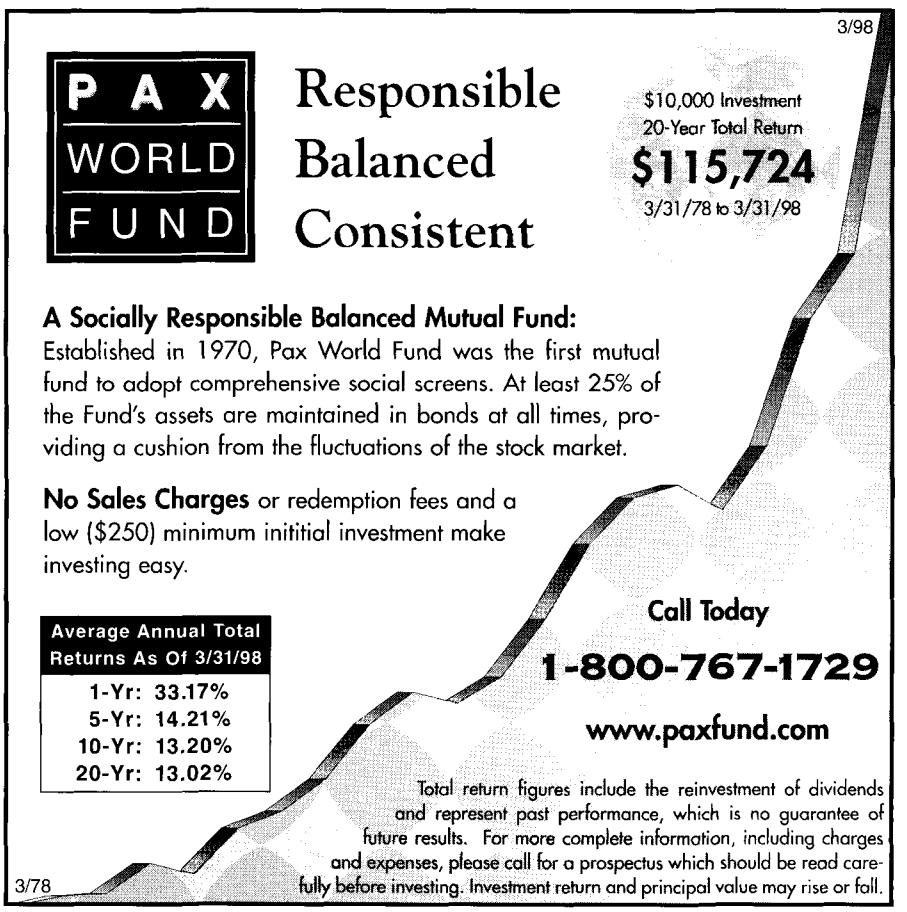
Real Politics
At the Center of Everyday Life
Jean Bethke Elshtain
The Johns Hopkins University Press, $29.95, 375 pp.

Patrick J. Deneen

Jean Bethke Elshtain is a rare asset in the increasingly specialized world of academia. Not only has she resisted the widespread academic tendency toward self-imposed irrelevance, but she has succeeded—where few have been able—in appealing to an educated audience whose names don't inevitably begin with the title Dr. or Professor. One might define her alternatively as a political theorist, as an ethicist, as a feminist, and all of these would be correct, but none of these alone or even together would be quite sufficient. As this collection of previously published essays attests, Elshtain casts her net widely in the fields of politics, philosophy, and literature, in social commentary and feminist critique, and comes up with a rich and compelling catch.

For all the variety that these essays offer, one finds a remarkable undercurrent of consistency throughout the collection, spanning her early feminist writings in the late 1970s to contemporary essays on democratic theory. As Elshtain describes her approach, the essays share a "block that kick" quality—a defensive posture against sometimes utopian or simply reformist tendencies that in various ways would threaten real politics, or real lives and relationships, in the name of the untested amelioration of society. This response, of course, is more than merely defensive; it is conservative. Like Edmund Burke's critique of the French Revolution, it resists arguments for social reorganization or the willingness to submit to the supposedly inevitable progress of history under the assumption that these progressivist impulses will very likely create scenarios for human life that are fundamentally worse than existing ones. That said, it would be entirely incorrect to call Elshtain a conservative thinker in the contemporary sense of that term. She exhibits throughout a concern for injustice in family settings; she frets over the possibility that small-town life, while a rich and rewarding experience for many, may also be thwarting and repressive for some; she rejects quite forcefully the typically conservative reverence for the role of the canon in education in favor of a much more dynamic approach that incorporates the traditional with the new.

A conservative who looks here for an easy ally will go away disappointed. Those on the political left, on the other hand, have been and will be scandalized. This visceral reaction, especially from the feminist left, comes across most clearly in responses to a 1979 Elshtain essay titled "Feminists against the Family"; this book includes not only the original essay, but subsequent responses by readers and Elshtain's ripostes. Apparent in the passionate responses to Elshtain is that feminists who read "Feminists against the Family" came away with the sense that Elshtain sought to defend existing family structures at all costs. In fact, this is not Elshtain's contention: hers is a much more interesting and revealing critique of the feminist motto, "the personal is political." As she writes, "note that the claim is not that the personal and the political are interrelated in important and fascinating ways not yet fully explored and previously hidden to us by patriarchal ideology and practice; nor that the personal and political may be fruitfully examined as analogous to one another along certain touchstones of power and privilege, but that the personal *is* political." Elshtain criticizes this perspective for its rather bleak Hobbesianism. "For," she continues, "if politics is power and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power is everywhere, politics is in fact nowhere and the vision of public life as the touchstone for a revitalized ideal of citizenship is lost."

Elshtain's prescience is in evidence throughout this book, but here it is rather stunning. Not only does she anticipate the direction of postmodernism, exemplified by the work of Michel Foucault who found power everywhere, but her criticism of this feminist mantra should have served as fair warning for the potential hypocrisy that this position might entail. She notes this hypocrisy in an essay on the Clarence Thomas-Anita Hill hearings, when feminist voices were nearly unanimous in their condemnation of Thomas's alleged sexual harassment, but were suddenly quieter when more substantial charges were leveled against Senator Robert Packwood. Why? As she notes, Gloria Steinem explained that Packwood's alleged activities should be taken in context, specifically the context of his voting record, which consistently supported causes dear to feminist organizations.

The reverberations of Elshtain's observation should be quite self-evident in context, specifically the deafening silence from feminists that has greeted the allegations of sexual impropriety against President Bill Clinton. The silence reveals a significant admission: the personal may not be as political as politics: what one does in private may not, in fact, determine inexorably one's political positions or the nature of political life.

Elshtain's essays—and subsequent works—reveal an abiding hope in the prospects for democracy and the ability of citizens to make reasonable and even moral judgments in a democratic setting. This is a hope—even a qualified faith—that many share, but which has at times been subject to radical doubt. In her recent book *Democracy on Trial*, Elshtain places Plato—a famous critic of democracy—in a fictional discussion with Abraham Lincoln about the place of transcendent truth and wisdom in politics. Lincoln asks Plato, "How can one know, save through democratic give and take, the rough and tumble of politics itself, who is the wisest and who is the best?" This is indeed a question Lincoln might have posed to Plato, but, on the other hand, Lincoln also consistently rejected the notion that one could trust entirely the democratic process to settle an issue such as of slavery. In the Lincoln-Douglas debates it was Stephen Douglas who defended the doctrine of "popular sovereignty," and Lincoln who invoked "truths" that we "hold to be self-evident." In this regard, it might be suggested that it was Douglas who was the good democrat and Lincoln who was the "Platonist." Elshtain is constantly and admirably attentive to the limits of politics and the finite nature of human knowledge, but to what extent she thinks that democracy must finally rest on self-evident truths that transcend "real politics" is not entirely clear. □

Patrick J. Deneen *is assistant professor of politics at Princeton University.*

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 4)

and special pleaders who seem to dominate the Op Ed pages these days—and one hopes he may even rein in the editors of *Commonweal*, who, with unexpected belligerence, seem ready to lob "smart bombs" on the Iraqi people in a new twist on that old refrain, "we had to destroy the village in order to save it."

JOSEPH D. POLICANO
Luquillo, Puerto Rico

Did parish schools work?

Whatever the benefits of the Catholic school system—and there have been many—I think Kathleen McGarvey Hidy [April 10] has idealized the system, while overlooking some important questions. If, as she says, "notions of stewardship, the common good, the responsibility of all Catholics in a community to rear the young have weakened or disappeared," where were the graduates of Catholic schools while this was happening? As for the flight to the suburbs, many graduates of our schools fled to avoid integration. Catholics are now very well represented in the upper echelons of business, where the values espoused are increasingly counter to the gospel. Do the graduates of our Catholic schools see any conflict here? Catholic charitable gifts, traditionally the lowest among Christian groups, have dropped further. What kind of faith formation is revealed by these examples?

When Hidy writes that the parish school "completed the circle of faith formation begun in our home," she is talking about those children who had a strong Catholic family life, which was not the case for many even in the time she is discussing. With a generation of parents whose own formation is poor, the problem is compounded. She admits that the Catholic school system now eats up a disproportionate share of church resources; one result is a lack of money to remedy the lack of formation among adults.

Without disparaging the Catholic school system, and agreeing with the author on the need to maintain our inner-city Catholic schools, I for one would rather steward our funds to address, creatively and successfully, the need for lifelong faith formation. Faith is caught, not taught, and it is caught primarily in the home.

DEIDRE HETZLER
Scottsville, N.Y.

A dose of heroin?

It would be a wonder for all of us to meet the saintly editorialist who can write so easily of "Pius XII's moral culpability." Indeed, I am not sure there is a saint in all of our history who would have used such a phrase—especially because we are enjoined, for our own benefit, to avoid the mental position which that phrase assumes. It may make the writer feel good for a moment, like a dose of heroin. But who else believes it?

Your writers on the difficult matter of the persecution of Jews seem not to be acquainted with the enormous literature in the field, especially that written by Jews.

This is shabby stuff for an "intellectual" journal. Leave it to the *National Enquirer*, which is in business,

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more honorably, strictly for the money.

GABRIEL AUSTIN
New York, N.Y.

From the editors: In context, the sentence containing the phrase that offends our correspondent does not impute culpability to Pius XII but says the issue of whether he was culpable can't be dealt with fairly without access by independent scholars to all the relevant documents in the Vatican archives. Other sentences in the same paragraph refer to the "distortions" of Rolf Hochhuth's play, *The Deputy*, and to exaggerated notions of the pope's ability to end Nazi genocide.

Finally, if Mr. Austin believes it is impious or a sign of hubris to suggest that a pope may have been morally at fault in his direction of church policy, he needs to become more familiar with the enormous literature on the history of the papacy.

Politicizing liturgy

As Barbara Zapzalka [Correpondence, April 10] correctly surmises in her comment on my letter of March 13, I have never been involved in a parish liturgy committee. (I did not understand that having done so was a condition on taking part in *Commonweal*'s discussion of the liturgy.) I have no intention of joining such a committee—first, because I have enough of that sort of politics in the academy; and, second, because I have many reasons to believe that a theological perspective which emphasizes the transcendence of God would not be welcome there.

Nevertheless, the perspective of a "consumer" (if we must talk that way) has some relevance—as every other contemporary institution acknowledges. A new clericalism, which dismisses men and women critical of the decisions of lay ministries, is no more acceptable than is the older variety. It is also divisive: Those who find themselves shut out are likely to take extreme and sectarian positions.

PHILIP E. DEVINE
Providence, R.I.

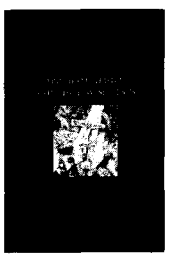
Hey, you did good

The issue of April 24 is superb. "Who's sorry now?" [editorial] took me to a level of reflection on public apology I've experienced in no other place. Ditto for John Garvey's "Jonesboro, Arkansas: Something does not love us"—the bite and compassion of the gospel in one well-wrapped package. Oh, for more theological reflection of such quality.

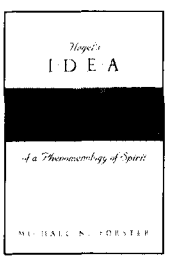
"Health-Care Reform," by Kip Sullivan, gave information not readily accessible and confirms what one amateur has been feeling in his gut about the HMO revolution. Thanks to James Finn and John Lynch for writing on war that took us where we would rather not go but are the better for visiting.

And finally, the letters from the trio at Boston College as a follow-up to the three outstanding pieces you published on the CTSA convention: It is not only enlightening when Catholics of different perspectives

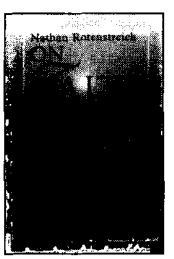
Spring for some Good Books



Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus
Susannah Heschel
"Susannah Heschel's superb analysis of the last hundred years of Jesus-research and its implication in the promotion of anti-Semitism has profound implications for anyone interested in religion. It is must reading for anyone concerned with Christian triumphalism and its devastating effects."—Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Harvard University Divinity School
Paper $19.00
Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism



Hegel's Idea of a *Phenomenology of Spirit*
Michael N. Forster
"There are so many books on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and such different ones, that it is foolhardy to suggest that any one of them is the 'best.' But if I had to pick a single book which seems to me to shed the most light on all the issues that surround Hegel's *Phenomenology*, it would certainly be this one."—Allen W. Wood, author of *Hegel's Ethical Thought*
Paper $30.00



On Faith
Nathan Rotenstreich
Edited and with a Foreword by Paul Mendes-Flohr
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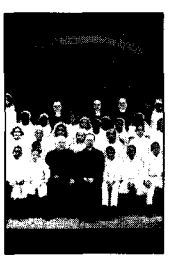

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talk to one another, it looks as though it could be fun for all of us.

JAMES A. EGAN, S.J.
Omaha, Neb

'Catholicism in its entirety'

As a board member of the National Center for the Laity, I attended the same January 17, 1998 liturgy described by Margaret O'Brien Steinfels in her Notebook, "Simply Catholicism—Please explain" [April 10]. I too wish that I had taped the homily by Cardinal Francis George. But fortunately I did bring my pen and took notes, having learned early on that Cardinal George speaks entire paragraphs extemporaneously.

"Simply Catholicism," by Cardinal George's own definition quoted by Steinfels, "in all its fullness and depth, a faith able to distinguish itself from any culture and yet able to engage and transform them all, etc." is something of an oxymoron. My own notes from his talk read, "Catholicism in its entirety." Against this full and entire Catholicism, neither what we call "conservative" nor "liberal" Catholicism is enough. Both are too limiting of what Catholicism can be.

Steinfels raised some interesting questions, but they emphasize one of Cardinal George's points which she did not quote, his distinction between a Catholic faith based upon "negotiation" and that based upon "surrender," the point being that in faith we "surrender" to Christ, that living, loving, concrete, real, eternal, resurrected person. We've been doing a lot of negotiating with each other over ecclesiology these days, and less surrendering to Christ.

Steinfels's claim that liberalism somehow "taught" Catholicism, reminds me of the recent neoconservative claims that their defense of the relationship between capitalism and freedom somehow also "taught" recent papal social teaching. Maybe both traditions are right, but not because of themselves, but because Catholicism "listens" to all, and learns from all. In that sense, I'd much rather be among the listeners and learners, than the teachers—if these teachers insist on being recognized solely upon their own terms.

Is Cardinal George right in using the phrases, "exhausted project. . . unable to pass on the faith in its integrity"? Despite all the vinegar therein, I must assent to his statement. I have lived and worked for quite some time among Catholic activists, and have noted that very, very few of my most active, public Catholic friends have succeeded in passing on the faith to their own children and grandchildren—to their own open regret. Many of their children are fallen-away Catholics, just as many among their grandchildren are now fallen-away Democrats. As for sectarian Catholicism being a failure, few will disagree. Few will also disagree that in Cardinal Francis George we have one of Catholicism's most provocative thinkers, whose extemporaneous musings should be regularly transcribed. Catholicism in these parts is again about to get very interesting.

ALBERT SCHORSCH, III
Chicago, Ill.

Cells for sale

I am glad you pointed out the sale in human flesh that is becoming common in our society [editorial, "Eggs for Sale," March 27]. As the spiritual dies, the desire for longer life becomes obsessive, even to the point of buying kidneys from the bodies of politically executed prisoners in China.

Even more grotesque is the sale (from abortion clinics) of brain cells from aborted fetuses whose brains are removed while they are still alive, as in partial-birth abortion techniques. Aged people with diseases like Parkinson's are paying high prices for this "commodity." Technicians do not put brain tissue cells from horses or cows or rats into these aging human brains; they use cells from fetuses precisely because these young cells are human.

A recent report spoke of an ethical question raised by an experiment in which half of a test group of Parkinson's patients received a transplant of fetal brain cells and half did not, with the promise that if the first group benefited the second would be offered the same procedure. The study asked whether this was permissible. It did not ask about the ethical question of the source of those brain cells, or the price paid (by the emerging fetus) for obtaining them.

In this climate, it becomes difficult to speak of the sacredness of human life. As Nietzsche said, when there is no God, there is no right or wrong; everything is permitted.

PETER J. RIGA
Houston, Tex.

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THE ORTHODOXY POLICE

Peter Feuerherd

Last autumn, I found myself up against the vast Catholic orthodoxy police, which operates in silence, making secret charges and convicting without allowing the accused to know what the accusations are. It was Kafkaesque.

Let me explain. Some people make widgets. I make articles for the Catholic press. For seven years, I wrote as national affairs writer for the *National Catholic Register*. It was an enjoyable part-time gig. I got a regular byline, my name was etched in the staff box, and, with some occasional yelling and screaming, I would get a check. My weekly stories—explaining vital national issues, such as welfare reform, abortion, school reform, the role of Catholics in electoral politics—consisted of "rounding up the usual suspects," providing quotes and perspectives from a wide array of Catholic opinion.

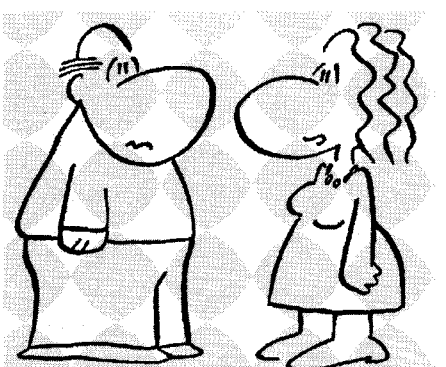
The *Register* is a conservative weekly newspaper with a circulation of some 20,000. Oops, sorry! I mean it is orthodox. Its editorial stance is strongly pro-pope, befitting a publication that prides itself on orthodoxy, and often pro-conservative Republican, which is another matter altogether.

When I began working for the *Register*, it was based in California and was owned by the Frawley family. I considered my stories to be right down the middle—never deviating from Catholic doctrine, but always expressing the many sides to the question at issue. Rarely were my articles questioned. And, while the editorial page and columnists were tilted toward the conservative/orthodox view, *Register* news writers were held to the highest standards of professional journalistic objectivity.

Two years ago, the *Register* was sold to the Legionnaires of Christ, a community of priests with a decidedly conservative (oops, orthodox) reputation. The paper's offices were moved to Connecticut and its editorial tone also began to shift in a more rightward direction. Changes were made in the top echelons of the paper. Still, most of the time my articles continued to be a regular part of the paper, often appearing on the front page.

One day last fall, my copy of the *Register* came in the mail. I was utterly astonished. The paper had a new national affairs writer and my name had been deleted from the staff box. Without a word, I had been blotted out of the *Register*. My Kafkaesque thoughts raced to those Soviet histories where out-of-favor commissars were airbrushed from the photos.

What had happened? Was my article about the United Parcel Service strike too pro-labor? Was there a sugar daddy supporting the Legionnaires, disturbed to find a pro-labor sentiment in their paper? Did I include too many diverse opinions on the abortion controversy? Maybe I had crossed a line by quoting from New Ways Ministry in a gay-rights story? Were there people unhappy with opinion pieces I wrote for *Commonweal* and for my regular job with a diocesan newspaper? I appear on a cable television talk show: Had I said something to tick off some well-connected person? Did I dangle too many prepositions? Too many unclear antecedents? What was this all about?



***"It isn't working, Lou. I'm Rabelaisian, but you're* Kafkaesque!"**

I phoned the *Register* powers-that-be. No, they said, my writing style was considered pretty good (I was praised for making complex subjects understandable). "We wanted to go in another direction," I was told. There were entire subject areas, I was told, where I was considered unfit for the *Register* style. What areas? What had I written? Had I violated some tenet of orthodoxy? The answers were deliberately vague. "Just tell me why I am no longer fit to write for the *Register*," I pleaded. The powers-that-be were silent.

I still have no idea. Only theories. Perhaps it was because I wrote favorably about ABC-TV's "Nothing Sacred." (Don't scoff: opposition to the now-canceled Father Ray and his parish team has become an orthodoxy litmus test among some groups.) Or maybe it had to do with comments I made about Long Island Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy, prochoice and a strong gun-control advocate (her husband had been shot and killed, along with several others, by a crazed gunman on the local commuter train). All I said was that some Catholics had good reasons to vote for her, and that others had good reasons to be against her, an observation that made some abortion foes angry.

Well, those are some of the theories that spin around in my head whenever I ask myself, "But why?"

Don't lump me with dissident theologians. I am an orthodox Catholic in agreement with basic church teachings on sex, social justice, and just about everything else.

But someone, somewhere, believes I don't quite measure up.

All I ask is for him—or them??—to step forward and explain how. □

Peter Feuerherd *is assistant editor of the* Long Island Catholic *and a free-lance writer.*

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Don't Blame The Bartender

Tonight Was a Long Time Coming

Could this priest be heading for his car? Let's hope not. Clearly, he's been drinking and he'd be putting in harm's way not only himself, but every occupant of every car on the road he drives.

Maybe he intends to walk. In which case, he might very well meet members of his congregation along the way. They can't fail to notice his unsteady gait and unfocused eyes. Will they feel shock or disappointment? More likely, what they'll feel is a sudden sense of abandonment.

Who's to blame? Alcoholism is a disease. The victim seldom is able to shake its tenacious grasp without a helping hand. Think about it. Didn't you notice, or at least suspect, ***before*** tonight, that Father had a chemical dependency problem? What steps have you taken?

One Out of Ten

Chemical dependency is a problem so widespread that at least ten percent of the Catholic clergy is afflicted. The popular impression is that men who are not treated are left to suffer the horrid consequences alone. That's simply not true. They don't suffer alone. Members of their dioceses fall victims, too.

If this priest decides tonight to drive in his impaired condition and has a serious accident, it could cost his diocese tens of thousands of dollars in legal fees and lawsuits – programs will have to be eliminated, parish improvements canceled, needy people deprived.

Shame shared.

You Need to Act Now

Time and time again, the court says, "They're your employees. You're responsible." ***If they get in an accident, the diocese is going to pay.***

As for those parishioners the priest may encounter if he instead decides to walk – no monetary system can repay the damage done them.

No Priest Is an Island

In the end, of course, it's not a moral issue for the alcoholic, but for you. We're only following our Faith in giving troubled clergy the "hand up" they require to continue their work with success and sobriety. They need us. More importantly, we need them. Denial by the priest or deacon is generally part of the problem, so contact us at Guest House for help on how to proceed. Call now. We are able to provide a complete spiritual, psychological and medical evaluation at no charge.

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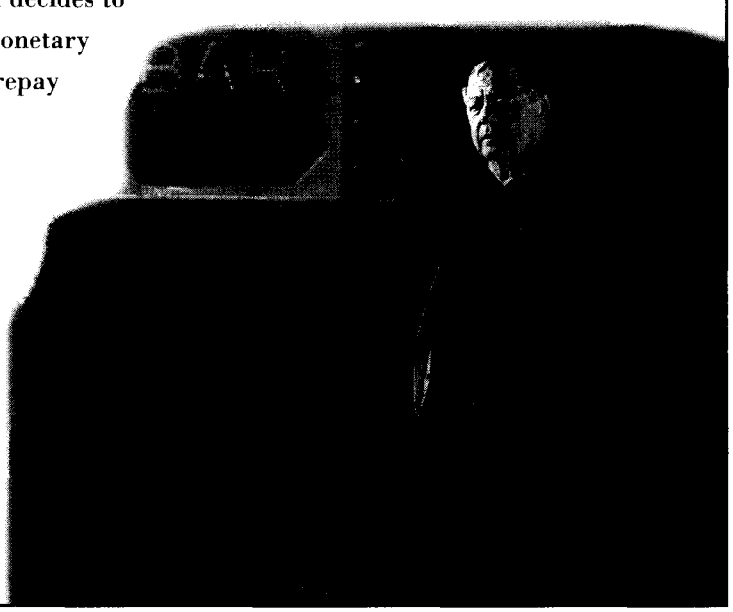

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